MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LAFARGE.

VOLUME I.

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LAFARGE;

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1841.

LONDON :
PALMER AND CLAYTON, PRINTERS,
10, Crane-court, Fleet-street.

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TO THE LADIES OF ENGLAND.

Go, oh! my thoughts, towards that free and lovely Isle, which has sympathies for misfortune, which will have belief for truth;—go, and bear my thanks to the noble Daughters of England, who have mixed their tears with my tears; carry my benedictions to those wives, virtuous enough to believe in virtue, strong enough, perhaps, openly to absolve a poor, condemned woman.

Noble Ladies, who are the happiness of those whom your hearts have chosen, the joys of your children, the glories of your homes, when I come to you, do not repulse me; let the sorrows of the prisoner mix themselves with your blessed and well-loved lives; give a tear to her griefs, absolution to her faults; let your faith protect her innocence on earth, let your prayers mount for her towards Heaven.

MARIE CAPPELLE.

Prison of Tulle,
14*th September,* 1841.

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TO MY FRIENDS.

I do not inscribe to you a book; I confide to you my actions and my thoughts.

Admitted to your affections, I would not willingly be estranged from you. It is necessary that I should tell you my errors, that you may pardon them; my innocence, that it may ensure your protection; my sorrows, that you who have hitherto loved me best, may continue to love me always.

In the solitude of my prison I have forgotten my sufferings, in order to return with you into the feelings of my life. I have disclosed to you all my joys, all my griefs, all my tears. I have remembered, wept, and written. I have not asked of God to make me eloquent, but I have prayed that he would endue all my recol-

lections with charity and truth, and that he would give to my words the power of persuasion—of conviction. If you shall approve what I have done; if it shall have strengthened a single belief, or have reclaimed a wavering mind, my object will have been accomplished.

My generous friends, you who have withheld me from despair, by placing my honour under the safeguard of your conviction, who have become the guardians of my unhappiness, may you be a thousand times rewarded!

I have preserved my life for the struggle, my strength to prepare for, and hasten, the great day of truth and restoration. If God shall call me to himself before I reach the goal I aim at, I entrust to you the good name of my father; I ask of you to do me justice in my epitaph.

MARIE CAPPELLE.

Prison of Tulle,
July 1841.

THE

EDITORS TO THE PUBLIC.

The publication of this work is a grave matter, differently appreciated, of which we feel the whole importance, and which we feel bound in honour to explain.

By a mode familiar to the gentlemen of the bar, M. Odillon Barrot has, previously to its publication, qualified a work which he had not read, as a *defamatory libel;* and has stigmatized as an *avaricious tool,* an editor whom he knew not. Neither of these names is more true than the other; and we repudiate both of these epithets.

To commence with the second. We will tell M. Odillon Barrot, that the property of this work does not belong to us. And that if, in spite of the attacks with which the advocate of

the Léautaud family threatens us, any profit should result from the publication, that profit, a consideration very secondary even in the eye of the author, will be neither for him nor ourselves.

To explain its destination, it will suffice to remind M. Odillon Barrot of that which he already knows, that nothing is gratuitous in our age,—no! not even eloquence; and that, when it is necessary to defend oneself in the past, the present, and the future, from powerful enemies, there are obligations from which neither ruin, loneliness, nor misfortune can exempt you.

We will also remind M. Odillon Barrot of a personal fact, the memory of which, it appears to us, should render him less ardent against those who, in the present case, without losing any of the respect due to the law, profess not in so lofty a degree the fanaticism of legal prejudice.

In 1817, a man, Wilfred Regnault, having an honourable position in society, had been condemned to death by the Court of Assizes de l'Eure for the assassination of a female, committed under circumstances of great horror.

Public opinion, excited by the evidence alleged, the composition of the jury, and the

evidently hostile character of many of the witnesses, more especially by the immorality and detestable principles of the principal one, was violently aroused in favour of the condemned. At the same moment, when Benjamin Constant offered the support of his pen to Regnault, a young counsellor of the Court of Cassation, who was no other than *M. Odillon Barrot* himself, charged with the defence of the convict, not content to plead the question of form, was not ashamed to maintain (vide the *Moniteur*, Dec. 1, 1817,) that there existed both a physical and moral impossibility that Regnault could be guilty of the crime for which he had been condemned. And then, attacking the deposition of the principal witness, this M. Odillon Barrot exclaimed, "Yet Regnault has been declared guilty! The deposition of a single witness has sufficed—and what a witness! A man, himself guilty, by confession, of many acts of crime; a man who has been belied by all whose testimony was necessary, to give the appearance even of truth to his own. Is it possible, then, that a jury should have declared Regnault guilty?"

In spite of his efforts, M. Odillon Barrot failed to substantiate the defence; but Reg-

nault, definitively sentenced, had his penalty commuted by royal clemency into perpetual imprisonment. Still the obstinate lawyer, convinced of his client's innocence, would not consider himself defeated. At his instigation, Regnault attacked the witness Mesnil on the score of perjury. The tribunal of Evreux rejected his complaint. The Cour Royal of Rouen confirmed this decision. This new incident, in a cause which occupied the attention of all, came before the Court of Cassation, and M. Odillon Barrot re-appeared to sustain, in the name of a convict, civilly dead, an accusation of perjury. Here, moreover, the advocate of Regnault, drawn on by his conviction, far overpassed the limits of the case itself. "Shall not a man," he cried (vide the *Moniteur*, Feb. 15, 1818), "a man, whose innocence is evident to all, yet who is oppressed by every tribunal, find safety but in the power of public opinion? Ah! let your judgment teach us that the unfortunate shall find an asylum in the law, without the necessity of seeking it elsewhere." This last appeal was rejected, like the preceding.

And yet, without wishing to say of Marie Cappelle, condemned by a jury, that which

Odillon Barrot said of Regnault, equally convicted, that her innocence is evident *to all* (an expression contrary both to truth and the respect we ever owe to the decisions of justice, even while we doubt her infallibility), if we prove the similiarity of many portions of the case we analyze with certain circumstances in the "*procès d'empoisonnement;*" if we remember that, thirteen years later (in 1830), Regnault, whose guilt ever remained a mystery, recovered his freedom; if we compare M. Odillon Barrot's audacious speeches in 1818, notwithstanding judgments in the Court of Assizes at Evreux, in the Court of Cassation and the decisions of the tribunal at Evreux, and the Royal Court of Rouen, four decisions given by four different tribunals; if we compare such speeches with those of M. Odillon Barrot, twenty-three years later, when, with a contrary conviction, and with no fear of compromising the power of his tongue by blasting the accused with the lightning of his eloquence, he attacked even the defender of that accused in a position which precluded him from reply; we shall perhaps be astonished to see the same man, who had so largely employed, in his own name,

and vindicated in behalf of Regnault, whom he proclaimed innocent, the right of appealing from the judges to public opinion, carry to day his fanatic prejudice for legal decision so far as to vilify, without knowing the complaints of, the condemned, to threaten to stay her pen, and to proclaim as "*avaricious tools*," men who, in the midst of such heavy uncertainty, have not believed themselves justified in refusing to promulgate all which may enlighten the public more completely in the case.

It was our duty, before entering on the defence of Marie Cappelle, and thus taking a part of its responsibility, to read, to examine, and to weigh. This we have done with as scrupulous sentiments of morality as those of the most cautious; and in subscribing our name, yet an honoured one, to such a defence, we conceive we have not only exerted a right, but have *fulfilled a duty*.

In truth, Marie Cappelle, the principal actor in a judicial drama, unexampled for terror in our annals, has momentarily concentrated on herself the attention of all Europe. During two whole days, on the weighty testimony of scientific men, all Europe believed in the innocence

of that female; during two days humanity rejoiced that a frightful crime had not been committed, and that a youthful female, accomplished and interesting, came out pure from an infamous accusation. For two days did the voice of the whole press repeat the applause of an affected auditory, while, echoing from one end of France to another, those acclamations wakened a sympathetic echo in every generous breast.

Two days after, all was changed. Science rudely destroyed the decision of science. Two days after, science saw crime where she had seen innocence; poison where she had seen none. The verdict of a jury hallowed her new decision. An affrighted audience passed abruptly from the conviction of innocence to the suspicion of guilt; and that same woman, so calm, and so radiant with the joy of an acquittal, suddenly precipitated from life into death, lay motionless, glanceless, thoughtless, and mute, upon her bed, awaiting the sentence which devoted her to infamy; while the world, astonished by this sudden change, and terrified to behold the most mysterious problems of the heart, the most grand and precious interests of humanity, the life and honour of a creature

fashioned in the likeness of God, resting on the chemical analysis of the millionth portion of an atom of matter, demanded—"Where is truth or certainty? Are we to believe the science of yesterday, the science of to-day, or the science of to-morrow?"

Yet is not all ended for this unhappy woman. Scarcely recovered from the lethargic apathy in which the dark changes and mournful *dénoûement* of that tragedy have plunged her, dead to civil existence, crushed beneath the weight of a terrible sentence, she must rise and drag herself again into the arena, to face a second accusation, less heavy, but not less infamous than the preceding one. Not only has she to contend with the organ of the law, but with a whole family, rich, honoured, and powerful, supported by two advocates, of whom, one successfully replaces talent by energy, while the other possesses the prestige of a powerful eloquence and a lofty reputation. Against such adversaries, deprived of her principal defender, who has left her to herself, despairing not of her innocence, but of her safety,* she has no defence.

* See the letter of M. Paillet in the *Siècle*.

Appearances, the necessity of proof, the absence of the principal witness, the change of public opinion, a former condemnation, the imprudence of a lofty imagination, a not all-blameless past, a blasted present, a hopeless future, and the darkness of a cause, whose secret rests with her, another female, and the eternal God,—all crowd upon her, and leave her to despair and the uncertain opinion of the ill-judging world.

Even thus situated, stricken by the law, exhausted both in body and mind, this woman disdains to seek repose enveloped in the mantle of her legal death. Powerless, she yet persists in combating to the last; in the midst of every difficulty, she takes the pen to defend herself against those resounding voices which have succeeded in her condemnation.

In a few weeks she writes two volumes, overflowing with talent, animation, originality, grace, and polished irony. With inconceivable freedom of spirit, she disengages herself from the moral shadows of a fearful doom, to give her tameless thought its rein; to wander smiling, in mockery or grief, amongst the labyrinth of her memories. She pleads not, nor argues; but tells her tale, as though she neither knew

how to argue or to plead. She allows her pen freely to run upon the paper, telling her story from her birth to her imprisonment — her family—her friends—her relations—her father's death, which so early deprived her of his fondness and affection—her mother's second marriage, seen by her with concentrated bitterness—the death of her grandfather—her last love, and her firmest support, which completed her isolation in the world—the vice of an education ill directed, now rigorous to excess, and now beyond measure lax—the shadows of a character, ardent, eccentric, tameless, yet noble, proud, sensitive, and generous—her childish impressions—her dreams—her joys—her girlish intrigues — her connexion with Madame de Léautaud—the episode of Clavé—the hurried marriage of the Author; the base deceit which decided it—the first day's journey in the post-chaise—the brutal *bath scene* at Orleans—the more fearful one following her arrival at Glandier—the famous letter which formed the basis of the accusation, and of which she reveals the origin, the cause, and the object—the primal resignation—the after calm and serenity—and, finally, the fearful catastrophe which plunged

her into an abyss of evils; in one word, all the events, important or trifling, which saddened or rejoiced the life of Marie Cappelle—all the good or bad thoughts suggested by her imagination or her heart, are painted in a style that brings the most admired pages of Madame de Sévigné, or the most highly wrought pictures of George Sand, to our memory.

And because this work, in which Marie Cappelle has had the good feeling to leave herself unpanegyrized and her enemies unvilified; because this work, which only answers the most inveterate attacks with the most delicate of railleries; because this work, in which she paints, relates, mocks, smiles, weeps, but never curses; in which she confesses and bewails her faults, while she denies her crimes; because this work is a *justificative memorial;* because her cause is so shrouded, her situation is so evil, and circumstances so overwhelming; her adversaries so powerful and her defence so badly conducted at the first, that the eloquence of a Demosthenes, with the enthusiasm of conviction, could never dream of establishing her innocence at the present hour; because Marie Cappelle, convinced that she has nothing to expect save from

herself and from the future, undertakes the solitary conflict; because she would develope with her pen what she failed to impress by her voice; because the strides of justice have been more rapid than her pen; *because she is condemned,* she shall be interdicted, in the name of the moral public, or rather in the name of her adversaries, from crying aloud, even unto death, that she is guiltless!

And this is in a country where humanity has wept so many judicial errors in tears of blood, sometimes produced by the ephemeral abuse of opinion, and at others by a fatal combination of overpowering circumstances; in the country of *Calas, D'Anglade, Surques, Lebrun, Legras,* &c. &c.; a country where, even recently, an unfortunate man, *Dehors,* condemned by two courts of assize to perpetual labour, has been acquitted of all guilt by a third; in a country where, scarcely five years since, the sonorous voice of *M. Odillon Barrot,* in a dilemma so often fatal, summoned a jury to choose between the accuser and the accused; between a young girl of sixteen, brought up under her mother's wing, and an officer spotted with previously known misconduct and guilt; and wrenched from that

jury a verdict of condemnation at which the very president of the court trembled! In such a country, with such terrible examples, when the relatives and friends of La Roncière have been able to labour without fear at the re-establishment of her innocence, by destroying in the public prints the evidence of her triumphant adversaries, they would deny to a convict *herself* the right of appealing, with a modest and decent confidence, from her enemies to the public, from the present to the future.

And when a woman, whose name has originated such diversity of feeling; whose cause has been enveloped in so much mystery; and whose voice has been so courageous, at last determines to render an account to all—of her thoughts and of her life—they would say to her: "Thy cause is so difficult of judgment, thy position so wretched, thy existence so irrevocably blighted, that no orator has daring enough to undertake thy defence; thou knowest not how to speak, but thou wouldst write; thou shalt not write! We have been able, while thou wert absent for four hours, we three, with one glory to direct on thy vacant place a torrent of fiery words. We have been

able, failing in that respect we owe to woman, however criminal she may appear, and more especially when the law has placed her beyond its pale, to call thee aloud a poisoner and a thief. Instead of entering on the unequal combat, instead of contending in bloated and furious words, thou wouldst answer with thy pen—a pen, whose talent and decency, render it but the more dangerous—thy tale can only be a lie; thou shalt not write!"

We say openly, that such arguments neither convince nor terrify us. Before printing the Memoirs of Marie Cappelle, we have repeated to ourselves, in order to tranquillize our conscience, that there was one in France with more judgment than Marie Cappelle, and that this one was all France; that Marie Cappelle could only be finally judged when she was understood; and that, in her position, the best way, and the only one to be understood, was for her, as for all the world, to write. We feel assured that the public, examining this defence in its cooler moments, unbiassed by impetuous gestures, the declamation, the fire, and the thrilling voice of the advocate, and comparing it with the attack so brilliant in style and so powerful in argument,

will not risk being so misled, or surprised, as to lose the capability of determining on which side truth exists, and on which side falschood. We have repeated to ourselves, that the enemies of Marie Cappelle, far from fearing this last and decisive proof, ought to hail it with delight, since it alone could complete their triumph, by furnishing Marie Cappelle with the means of defence, and the public with the means of being a competent judge of the combat.

We never would have consented to edit a libel; but we edit, without fear or scruple, a work of talent and taste—a work in which the author only developes assertions previously put forth, and wherein the refinements of the pen, in the eyes of those even who consider them hypocritical, can be considered no more than the just homage of vice paid to virtue. Nor, in acting thus, have we been guided, as has been so falsely stated, by cupidity. Far from wishing to defile the public morals or the human majesty of legal decisions, we have the desire to contribute, as much as possible, to the accomplishment of an end which should be the desire of all—*the manifestation of truth.*

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LAFARGE.

CHAPTER I.

I was born on the birth-day of my father, in 1816.

That kind father had desired a masculine *bouquet;** but he was comforted when he looked on my mother, and imprinted a kiss on the brow of his little Marie.

A first child, the joy and pride of two generations, ought to be as beautiful as the angels. Alas! I came into the world sufficiently ugly to

* It is the custom in France to make presents on birth-days; and of whatever they may consist, they are called *bouquets*.

dispel even the illusions of a mother! The prettiest bonnets, the gayest clothes, failed to improve me; and, in order to admire me as much as my family, who maintained that my yellow complexion was charming, and that my leanness indicated distinction, the good friends to whom I was presented consented to sacrifice truth to politeness.

My baptism was the prologue to a marriage between Mademoiselle Destillière, a friend of my mother, and M. de Brack, whose military standing, mind, and handsome person possessed a value much less positive, but an attraction almost equally powerful, as the splendid dowry of the wealthy heiress. Mlle. Destillière forgot me with the dreams of her girlhood; and nothing accrued to me from that union except an excellent sponsor, and the name of *Fortunée*, so foreign to my life.

In recalling my earliest remembrances, I see first the great trees of Villers-Hellon—the little carriage in which I was wheeled through the avenues of the park—a plum-tree under which I broke an arm while my nurse Ursula shared a plum with a handsome gamekeeper.

If I seek further, I recall my grandmother,

with a long red shawl, leaning over my cradle to watch my awaking ; I hear my mother, who scolded my nurse when I was naughty, and my grandfather, who sang to me with a hoarse voice the *Magnificat des Cordonniers de Montpellier*.

At a later period my father became Lieutenant-Colonel at Douai ; and I ought to add to the list of my dearest reminiscences, the Sunday parade and the cannon of the polygon. My nurse Ursula did not altogether understand the poetry of the manœuvres, and my mother feared an accident ; an attempt was therefore made to induce me to renounce my favourite amusement, by surrounding me with toys and sweetmeats ; but if I could manage to ascertain the moment when my father put on his sword to go out, I hung about his neck, wept and triumphed.

Scarcely had we reached the parade, when I quitted the arms of Ursula for those of the soldiers. They allowed me to fire off their pieces, laughed at my courage, and showed how highly they esteemed their colonel by spoiling, through adoration, their *petite artilleuse*.

Summer brought me back to Villers-Hellon.

and there my amusements became rural without being less boisterous. The sheep-folds were full of beautiful Merino lambs; the smaller of which tranquilly suffered martyrdom from my caresses, while those who were larger answered my endearments with an energetic butt of the head. Sometimes, when my nurse had neglected to watch me, I would climb to the back of a large sheep, who, affrighted at such treatment, rubbed, shook itself, and finally pitched me into the straw, which, while it excited my childish laughter, was always the source of some tears of vexation.

Then eggs, still warm, were collected for my breakfast—the fowls sought their food at my feet—the ducklings endeavoured to swim in the pond; and there were flowers to wither and fruit to spoil. My health was very delicate, and it was forbidden to make me weep; I was therefore a happy, spoiled, and wilful child, with a good heart but a very bad head.

When I was five years old my mother gave birth to another daughter. In order that I might see this little sister, I was taken to the bedside of my mother. I found her so ugly, that I compared her to a poor little sparrow

without feathers, such as had recently been given me, and I received but one kiss for my punishment. That sad, single kiss, the ordered silence, the dimness of the apartment, and the thousand attentions with which that little creature, who was not *me*, was surrounded, drew from me a tear, which trickled to the shoulder of my father, and caused me to look with no favourable eye on her who had come to be loved as much as I was beloved.

The birth of Antonine occupied much of my thoughts. I at first believed that she had come from heaven, where I had seen the stars; but again, I thought they were too high for her to fall from, without being hurt. Then the midwife and accoucheur, who told me they had brought her, were neither so fair nor so beautiful as the angels of God. They spoke to me of a cabbage under which she had slept, but I did not believe them. During two days, I examined every cabbage in the garden, without finding anything of the kind; and at length, on the third day, I became convinced that my sister had come in an egg like a chicken; only her egg was much larger, and required a doctor to break it. I did not reveal my discovery to

any one, but it hindered me for some time from sleeping, and made me exceedingly proud.

My aunt Garat gave birth to a daughter about the same time with my mother. The two christenings took place together. To these were added that of Hermine de Martens, who, born in Prussia, had come to France to be baptized, in order that my grandfather might be her sponsor. Her intended godmother being unable to be present at the ceremony, I was chosen to supply her place.

When I reached the church, and found myself in the midst of a concourse of peasantry, hanging on the arm of my grandfather, with a large bouquet and ribands—yes, ribands, from head to foot—my memory failed me, and the words which had been taught me for more than a month past, were obliged to be whispered to me by the schoolmaster, who had the cruelty to perform this office loudly, and without regard to the self-love of a five-years-old.

I was grievously humiliated, and afterwards, when I should have given her sweetmeats, I would not. My grandfather was vexed, but I was obstinate; and I passed from the church to a dark chamber, where I moistened with my

tears some excellent delicacies, which, however, greatly contributed to make me forget my mischance.

A year later I lost my good grandmother, of whom I merely remember her caresses; her large dark eyes which always smiled upon me; that she taught me to know and to love flowers; and that she had a pretty aviary, in the neighbourhood of which it was necessary to be silent and cautious. She had not quitted her bed for a long time; she used to coax me to climb upon it; and she then amused me with long gaudy coloured ribands, which I patiently rolled up, merely for the pleasure of afterwards unrolling them.

CHAPTER II.

My grandmother was the daughter of Colonel Campton, an Englishman. When she was nine years old, and still in mourning for her father, she was deprived of her mother also.

Madame de Genlis, *gouvernante* to the children of the Duke of Orleans, was the protectress of the poor little orphan. She welcomed her on her arrival in France, and caused her to share in the instructions given to her royal pupil, Mademoiselle d'Orleans.

Madame de Valence, daughter of Madame de Genlis, attached herself to the young Hermine, added the advantage of strict affection to the gift of a perfect education, made her the partaker of her joys and sorrows, and received with her last sigh her latest thought.

My kind grandfather thus informed me concerning his marriage.

Mademoiselle Hermine Campton, at eighteen, was a sweet girl, slender but graceful; with hair blacker than the raven's wing; eyes, dove-like when they were not lighted up by excitement; a *nonchalante* mouth; and a small nose of that kind which indicates that its owner has a will of her own.

M. Collard, a friend of M. de Genlis, saw, and fell dotingly in love with her.

Having come from the plains of Gascony, poor, to the extent of having ten brothers, my grandfather was indebted to M. de Talleyrand for placing him on the road to fortune. He was handsome and elegant. Those most difficult to please, would have granted him a diploma of matrimony; so he was accepted.

Before his marriage, M. Collard had been arrested as a Girondist. The 9th Thermidor and the death of Robespierre saved him.

A contractor for the supply of the armies of the Republic under the Directory, he was enabled rapidly to acquire a fortune; being still indebted for opportunities to Prince Talleyrand, who became the godfather of his son, and who chose the beautiful Princess Borghese to become godmother on the occasion.

That delightful sister of Napoleon was then only Madame Le Clerc, and occupied the château of Mont-Gobert, near the château of Villers-Hellon, which had been purchased by my grandfather. Here the christening took place. The Prince of Beneventum, desirous of exhibiting at once his wealth and good taste, had caused to be brought from Paris a rich and elegant present, customary on such occasions, and which, of course, should consist of ribands tinted with all the hues of the rainbow; flowers pretty enough to be opposed in rivalry to those of the fields; in short, all such useless luxuries of the toilet as should belong rather to the fashion of to-morrow than to that of to-day. The packages arrived. They were undone in the saloon. All were eager to see, to admire their contents; but, lo! instead of what was expected, there were ribands of the last year's fashion, faded scarfs, and gloves large enough to hold four little hands like those for which they had been meant—with paper flowers and plaster sweetmeats! Madame de Talleyrand had caused an exchange to be made in a moment of jealousy. The despair of the godfather could not calm the disappointment of

the pretty godmother, and my uncle was baptized in an atmosphere of vexation and ill-humour.

My grandfather seldom quitted Villers-Hellon except for the sessions of the Legislative bodies. He had no mere taste for anything—with him all was passion, the duration of which, however, was very unequal to its violence, and he had become a landholder with his usual ardour. During two years he planted gardens, orchards, and woods, constructed roads, and stocked warrens. Then going to Chantilly and seeing the establishments of Merinos, he was seized with *moutonomania*, which he retained for the next five years; during which all his sheds and greenhouses were converted into pens and sheep-folds, and the fields and orchards were turned into artificial prairies. The shepherd's crook became the sceptre of this new age of gold; and if the sheep were admirable, the shepherdesses were so charming that in beholding them their charge would be forgotten.

My grandmother, who liked neither sheep nor shepherdesses, drew around her a circle of neighbours and friends, brought up her children, and passed her spring in regretting Paris,

and her autumn in hoping to return to it. In due time she saw her three daughters married.

My mother, the eldest, was beautiful—of that placid beauty which affords pleasure to the heart rather than to the eye; full of amenity, grace, with solid and attaching qualities, she was the favourite of her father. In 1815 she was wedded to M. Cappelle, a captain of artillery.

Hermine, who was two years younger, resembled my grandmother. Nothing could be finer or more graceful than her physiognomy, except her mind. Her vivacity alone gave animation to the house of my grandfather. She, in 1817, married the Baron de Martens, a Prussian diplomatist.

Louise, the youngest, might be compared to the sweetest of moss-roses. That beautiful and laughing girl of fifteen relinquished her dolls to enact the part of Madame. She married the son of an intimate friend of my grandfather, M. Garat, Director-General of the Bank of France.

To that pleasant trio must be added my uncle Maurice, a romping, good-humoured boy, who passed his years at college, and his vacations at Villers-Hellon. My grandfather and grandmother had frequent discussions concerning the

course Maurice ought to adopt, and sometimes contrived on the subject to exceed the bounds of mere conversation, and to trespass on those of small, though amicable, disputation. When the moment of positive decision arrived, however, the matter was deferred till the morrow, and thence to a future day. Thus days sped onwards, flowing into years, and my uncle alone took the part which was agreeable to him—that is to say, he did nothing.

After the death of his wife, my grandfather intrusted the care of his house to his daughters, who came alternately to people his solitude. My mother, the eldest and the favourite, was most frequently and especially called to represent her whom all regretted. Good and pious the dispenser of the charities of her father, the amiable distributor of his cordial hospitality towards his friends, she every day became more indispensable to him; and every summer I consequently spent with her at Villers-Hellon.

That sweet little corner of Picardy is the paradise of my childhood. There I was so happy, so entirely beloved, so much spoiled! It was not alone my excellent grandfather whom I found there, nor my very good aunts, nor

well-beloved cousins, nor the spring time and the flowers;—there were two old nurses assiduously careful of me and my sister, who consoled us when we were unhappy, had ever a kiss for our saddened brows, and a *bonbon* to obliterate our tears; there was the old coachman with his white horses; the kind peasants who carried us in their arms, as they had carried our mother; the little children whose bows and curtesies delighted us when returning from mass, and with whom we quarrelled afterwards in the excitement of our sports.

In the winter we returned to be near my father, who was at that period superintendent at Mézières. As far as Rheims we wept for our Villers-Hellon; but afterwards, anxious for the pleasure of again seeing my father, we were chagrined at the slowness of the horses, and experienced intolerable impatience until the moment when the draw-bridge resounded beneath the wheels of our *calèche*, when the soldiers presented their arms, and we were both enclosed in the arms of the dear—the recovered absentee.

I have almost forgotten every thing of Mézières, except our lone house, near the powder-

magazine, a kid, who was obedient to our commands, and a charming family, with whom we exchanged frequent visits.

The Count de J—— was a big man, whom we seldom saw except in the dining-room. His wife was good and pretty, and an intimate friend of my mother. She had a little girl named Henriette, with whom she wished me to form a friendship; but who was too childish to comprehend my seven years' attainments, and too much spoiled to become my slave. When our contests grew noisy and furious, the Viscount de J——, her uncle, would come and restore peace between us by relating to us the most beautiful fairy tales. It is to him I am indebted for the knowledge of 'The Ass's Hide,' of 'Little-Thumb,' and 'The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.' His kindness was perfect. Some years later a kick in the chest from a horse occasioned his death while still young. I long wept for, and regretted him.

It was at Mézières that my lessons began. A serjeant-major taught me to write and to march. Every morning I repeated a lesson of sacred history and geography; and during the day I was introduced to the mysterious charms of

all the quavers and semi-quavers of the gamut.

Study afforded me no great pleasure. I took advantage of the visits of our friends, to fly to the office of my father, and drag him on the ramparts; there I would race with my favourite kid; I glided delightfully along the turf-covered slopes; and when I was tired or out of breath, my father would speak to me of the little King of Rome, the beautiful imperial angel, whose portrait was suspended over my pillow, and who was nightly the object of my prayers.

CHAPTER III.

Two years had thus passed between Villers-Hellon and Mézières, when my grandfather came to see us, with my aunt De Martens and her daughters.

Hermine was fair and fresh coloured, and so perfectly rational as to be an object of comparison by no means flattering to me; I consequently soon considered her pedantic and *ennuyeuse*. Antonine, on the contrary, admired her so highly, that she made no difficulty in sacrificing our French games for the German amusements of our cousin. They became intimately allied, and I was wicked enough to be the mar-feast of all their enjoyments.

Bertha was still under the care of her nurse, and could do nothing but cry and sleep.

One day an officer, M. P——, spoke in admiring raptures of my pretty cousins. My aunt

affected modesty, and attempted to deprecate his praises, when unconsciously he exclaimed, "Oh! Madame, you cannot be too proud; did not even the owl believe her own young ones to be enchanting?" The expression enraged my aunt; and the poor man was thenceforth the owl of all the ladies.

In the following summer, at the period of the coronation of Charles X., I for the first and last time saw Prince Talleyrand. My grandfather entertained him at Villers-Hellon. The court and gardens were illuminated, and after dinner the magnificent flocks of three farms were passed in review before the windows of the saloon. That agricultural spectacle appeared to amuse the great diplomatist. It was a novelty to him, and he readily accepted for Valençay two of the finest rams from the stock.

I had so often heard of M. de Talleyrand, that I regarded him with great attention, and have him full in my mind's eye still. He had nobility stamped upon his brow, and was perfectly agreeable; though, unfortunately, it was well known that his amiability did not spring from his heart, but was subject to his will. I remember that the day after his arrival, I said

to my grandfather, "Your prince even limps with elegance."* This procured me a fervent kiss, and some compliments sufficient to gratify my vanity as a little girl.

Nearly every autumn, Madame Elmore, the daughter of the celebrated Séguin, the contractor for victualling the armies of Spain, came from England to pass a few months at Villers-Hellon. M. Séguin had been intimately connected with my grandfather. For a long time they occupied two hotels in the Rue d'Anjou, separated only by a garden; and their children, who spent their hours of recreation together, formed one of those close friendships which endure through life with all their radiant reminiscences.

At that period, namely, verging on the fall of the Directory, M. Séguin was already immensely rich, and gave tokens of his subsequent madness by an excessive love of music, which induced him to procure for his children the most distinguished masters, all appointed, however, with the exclusive view of developing in their pupils the *musical sense*. Mlle. Zoé first opened her eyes upon the gamut, quitted a teacher of melody for a master of

* M. Talleyrand was lame.

accompaniment, rested her fingers fatigued with a *sonata*, to shriek out some grand airs of Gluck and Mozart, and at length terminated her harmonious martyrdom in going to the Opera, not as a listener and spectator, but to write the most difficult passages of the score. For all of heart and of mind they possessed, the two poor children —I say two, because Abel scraped his violin while his sister struck her piano—were indebted to Madame Séguin, who trenched upon their slumbers in order to give them some smattering of religion, of history, and geography, to make them able to write two or three lines and spell a few words. Nay, I am unjust; the paternal solicitude of M. Séguin allowed them three times a week, in the intervals of their musical lessons, a professor of conjuring, of riddles, and of fortune-telling. They learned also to blow glass, and practised a little of chemistry. To reward their progress, their father gave juvenile balls for them, when, after supper, and their heads were exalted and obedience forgotten, a saloon was thrown open, in the midst of which was an immense *mère-gigogne*, from under whose petticoats peeped forth treasures of dolls, swords, foot-balls, and sweetmeats. "Go!

seize! all are yours!" cried the host; and instantly the children would squeeze forward, overthrowing, tumbling over, rending, and beating each other, to obtain a prize. In the midst of this Babel of cries and tears, M. Séguin would stand laughing and rubbing his hands, enjoying the struggles and tears of the poor children, the disquietude of their friends, and indeed the whole of that infantile anarchy and uproar.

The large portion of Mlle. Séguin attracted a crowd of pretenders. The Duke de N. put himself in the ranks; but the noble suitor was rejected on account of his lack of the wealth which he sought. At that time, the mania for horses having acquired ascendancy over all the other manias of M. Séguin, he made the acquaintance of Mr. Elmore, whose stables at London contained the best racers and the purest breed. Elmore had no position in society, and little fortune; but the craftiest horse-jockey could not deceive him as to the age and qualities of a horse. He was an invaluable guide in collecting a stud, a redoubtable enemy to roguish dealers; and M. Séguin was led to select him for a son-in-law from motives of

economy. Mr. Elmore was not handsome. He had red hair, and did not understand two words of French; but he was a heretic, and promised to become a convert: Mlle. Zoé therefore accepted him, in order to gain heaven and a husband.

Madame Elmore was not very pretty, though greatly admired; but her defects were overlooked for the sake of her charming smile, her animated eyes, her free and graceful figure, her small foot, and her shrewd and active mind. She was, moreover, very coquettish, and exceedingly devout. Her husband, who in no point bore a resemblance to his wife, had, instead, the most unimpeachable good-nature. He spoke very bad French, passed his days in hunting, and divided his evenings between slumber and me.

My childhood was so often amused by the originalities of M. Séguin, which one of my old nurses used to relate to me of an evening to lull me to sleep, that I cannot pass them in silence, while speaking of the existing impressions of those pleasant times.

M. Séguin was a very small and very poor chemist when he discovered, at the moment the

Republic needed equipments for its army, the method of tanning leather in much less time than usual, and by employing, I believe, the bark of the oak. They held out the prospect of a fortune if successful, and of the guillotine in case of failure. M. Séguin trusted to his star, and fortune became his slave. He then married a noble, but poor girl, opened his house to all that Paris still contained of amiable and elegant, and became remarkable for his sumptuous extravagances. His balls were admirable, his dinners inimitable. An unambitious dining-room was first entered by his guests, in which stood a table, laden with oysters, soups, and fish. At a given signal another saloon was thrown open, and exhibited tables groaning under the most magnificent plate, and containing the most exquisite viands; and, beyond this, the company passed onward to enjoy the dessert in a delicious apartment, perfumed with the rarest flowers, lighted with a thousand lamps, resplendent with crystal, and silver-gilt, and where all the most delicate of luxurious refinements were heaped and blended in gorgeous profusion.

M. de Talleyrand, tempted one day with a desire to see this eccentric magnificence, asked

my grandfather to procure him admission to one of his friend's dinners. The wish was communicated to M. Séguin, who promised to surpass himself in order to astonish his Excellency. M. de Talleyrand and my grandfather, on reaching his hotel, were ushered into a counting-house. M. Séguin poured forth a thousand excuses—his wife was absent—he could only give them a bachelor's dinner, and they must, therefore, extend to him their indulgence. This humility came with a bad grace from the mouth of the celebrated Amphytrion; but nothing softens one more effectually than the prospect of an excellent repast. It was thought that he desired to be complimented, and accordingly compliments were not spared. At length the clock struck six, when a domestic entered, spread a napkin over the writing-table, and placed three plates and three chairs. M. Séguin went into the adjoining apartment, and returned, bearing in his own hands a bell-shaped patent saucepan, for making portable soup, explained gravely the advantages of this new process, added thereto a steak, and a piece of Gruyère cheese, and graciously did the honours of his table. My grandfather was indignant, M. de Talleyrand fasted,

like a man of spirit, and not without being filled with resentment.

M. Séguin had some magnificent grounds near Paris, in which he sometimes gave *fêtes*. One day he announced a series of prizes, sports, and dances for the villagers of the neighbourhood. Above all there was to be a race in sacks, which was sure to excite much laughter among his friends, and to call forth the ambition of the peasants to gain the prize, which was a very beautiful watch. On the eve of the *fête*, he caused to be dug, in profound secresy, near the goal at which the racers were to arrive, a ditch, about twelve feet deep, which was afterwards covered with twigs and fine gravel. The unfortunate runners, encumbered with their sacks, hurrying towards the winning post, were plunged into the gulph. The fall was horrible. There were broken arms and fractured heads. The people would have killed the rascally proprietor; and, but for powerful influence, he would scarcely have escaped the fangs of the police.

About the same time he was embroiled with the Princess of Chimay, who occupied an hotel

adjoining his in the Rue de Varennes. M. Séguin caused a mountain of barren earth to be raised in his garden, which so completely shut out the rays of the sun and the daylight from his unfortunate neighbour, that she was compelled to abandon her residence.

After the marriage of his daughter, M. Séguin took an antipathy to the world. He forbade his wife to receive even the visits of her friends; and in order to sequester himself more entirely, he had all his staircases removed, and thus rendered it necessary to use ladders to reach the upper apartments of his mansion. These proceedings were carried to such extremes, that Madame Séguin was obliged to go to her daughter in England; and her husband, no longer being able to find amusement in persecuting her, shut himself up in a little garret of his palace, where he lived with his violins, his steam-boilers, his madness, and his female porter.

Having sent away all his domestics, his splendid horses were left to wander at liberty in his garden, to live on withered leaves, and be reduced to the semblance of their former

shadows. Some time before his death, M. Séguin determined on selling them, and for that purpose, sent for a horse-dealer. On discussing the price, however, they could not agree; and the owner ended the dispute by causing all the noble beasts to be shot.

CHAPTER IV.

We passed the winter in Paris, and my father went to Valence, where his regiment was stationed. His absence caused me to experience a dreary void. Shut up in one of those Parisian apartments which are at the same time so pretty and so small, condemned to study grammar, history, and geography, relieved only by an occasional walk to the Tuileries, and then, without liberty of action or movement, I became melancholy and annoyed, and consequently annoying. I was unable to take the least step without overthrowing something, the echo of which was sure to reach the ears of my mother. If I sang or danced, the whole house was shaken. Every moment I was sent from the saloon by a visitor. Antonine, who had the meekness of an angel, did not share my amusements; and, to conclude, I had an old piano-

forte teacher, who tortured me with *flats* and *semi-tones*, and would not permit me to play the least air to the detriment of my scale and exercises.

Marshal Macdonald, who was at the head of the royal establishment of St. Denis, and had well known my grandfather, advised my mother to subject my growing independence to the yoke of the Institution. Admission as a boarder was accordingly obtained for me, and I was conducted to St. Denis in the month of March. My mother, who feared the consequences of my despair, did not pre-inform me what was intended; but one morning bade me go with her in the carriage, took me to St. Denis, and only when the great gates of the convent had closed upon us, and we had been introduced to Madame de Bourgouing, the superintendent, was told by the latter, as she kissed my forehead, that she had now a daughter the more, and that I was destined to remain with her. It took my mother a quarter of an hour to enumerate my faults, and to give an idea of the cries and despair which might be expected from me at her departure; a scene from which she desired to save herself by avoiding leave-taking. Leaning

against a window, however, immoveable, dejected, I heard and understood all, and resolved to restrain the tears with which my heart was bursting.

A lady of the establishment came in search of me, took me by the hand, and from the wardrobe dressed me in a long, black, high-necked frock, a cap, a bag which it was necessary for me to carry eternally on my arm, and thick, black, and frightfully large, low shoes. When my mother beheld me thus, she kissed me, and could not refrain from weeping; while I believed that I was going to die, so much did I suffer from the thought of my imprisonment, and from the pride which suppressed my tears. At length, when she was gone, I threw myself sobbing on the little bed which was thenceforth to be mine, stuffed the curtains into my mouth to stifle my cries, and closed my eyes that they might not rest upon my dismal garments, so unlike the gay little robes to which I had been accustomed.

I found at St. Denis the daughter of General Daumesnil, a friend of my childhood, but she failed to console me in those first moments. Mlle. Vallin, a beautiful girl, niece to my aunt

Garat, and Mlle. Fleurot, an under-governess, whom I had seen at my mother's, endeavoured also, but in vain, to make me smile. My tear were dried up only by that sound sleep which pertains to the age of nine years.

My first day at school was one of such striking contrast with those of my life of independence and freedom, that it remains graven on my memory in mournful characters. I was sleeping still when the customary signal awoke the two hundred little girls of our large dormitory. My eyes opened in astonishment, and my first though was a sad one. Marie embraced me: her bed was next to mine. She became my *cicerone*, and had in charge to make me acquainted with my new life.

After combing themselves, the pupils entered, twenty by twenty, into a dressing-room, furnished with water-pipes and a large copper wash-basin. The water being frozen, and the children fresh from their warm beds, the majority wetted only their little fingers; and when they saw me blue and shivering from the effects of the cold water, they laughed and jested concerning my fanatical notions of cleanliness.

Being dressed once more in our mournful robes, we went to mass and prayers. The latter

consisted of a few words addressed to the Almighty to entreat of him goodness for ourselves and health for our friends. Then came a long prayer read from a book, in which the pope, the bishops, the deacons, the archdeacons, and every order and degree had their orisons. The youngest girls finished their sleep on their knees; those who were older repeated their lessons, or sometimes concluded a romance borrowed in secret, during their hour in church. This done, all were put into ranks, and led to the refectory to breakfast on miserable soup; and afterwards we were allowed a few moments in the cloisters until it was time to hear the classes.

Lessons were now to be learned, but those who were friends formed groups and chatted with each other, laughing under their books. Every one looked at me with the silly curiosity of a school-girl. Marie introduced me to several pupils, and from the first I entered into the party of the ultra Napoleonists. At lesson time I was examined. Having studied almost alone, I had hurried through my books, and knew a little of everything without having learned anything perfectly. There was considerable difficulty in classing me: but at last I was

allowed to remain in the division of Marie, on my promising to go through, in my over hours, the classes below that in which I was placed. I had a facility of acquisition which rendered this an easy task to me. As I sobbed, instead of profiting by the permission to do nothing, which was granted me on my day of entrance, it was suggested that I should practise on the piano to relieve my mind. I was almost stunned on entering a hall containing fifty pianos, all being played at the same time, and making an infernal harmony of gamuts, sonatas, waltzes, exercises, romances, and cadences—every description of study, in which all kinds of music were confounded and outraged: I sat down to a piano, but the keys remained mute, and were only moistened by my tears.

At two o'clock we were summoned to dinner, and afterwards we had a long interval of relaxation in the garden. Marie, wearied with my incurable sadness, left me on a bench, where, reflecting on my slavery, I wept for my father, for Antonine, my mother, and Ursula my nurse. A pupil in passing exclaimed, loud enough for me to hear, "What a silly cry-baby!" That word aroused me; I wiped away my tears, and

asked whether she had not also cried at being separated from her father?

"If you are angry, child," replied she, laughing, "go and tell."

"What am I to tell?—that you are silly and malicious? That can be no news to those of your acquaintance."

The pupil was a hypocritical and detested royalist. My answer was deemed haughty and impatient, but very justly applied, and I gained thereby one enemy and ten friends. On returning to work I was called to the superintendent, who honoured me with the most edifying remonstrances, and preached to me of personal submission, having been informed beforehand of my likings and dislikings to the minutest of my faults, and its contrary virtue.

At eight o'clock came supper, followed by another interminable prayer, and then we were dismissed to bed. A juvenile imperial council was held on one of the beds in the dormitory, to which I was admitted, and where I caught a severe cold, and secured a punishment for the morrow.

It required some time for me to comprehend my new existence, and I could never reconcile

myself to it. I did not understand how to walk in a long robe; twenty times a day I forgot that it was improper to open or shut a door without a curtesy; I forgot that to have a bag hanging on the arm was another decency which a young modest girl should never omit; and lastly, I was often guilty of the unbecoming levity of descending to the refectory without having buried my head under an immense hat! If I add to all this, that I could not speak low, that I laughed without concealing my face with my writing-book, and that I constantly deranged the symmetrical line of the ranks of my class, it will be understood why I had always the mortification of wearing my hat hind side before, which was the usual punishment of one who ventured to exhibit the least independence.

In proportion as the slavery of our acts and deeds was intolerable, so the freedom of our thoughts was immense. Our governesses never conversed with us. We exchanged at our own pleasure the most fallacious ideas. Our public conduct was the guarantee of our moral perfection, as our bags and our hats were of our virtues. If, however, I may judge from the recollections of ten years old, I believe that our

higher studies were better cared for and better understood; and that everything taught us was thoroughly taught. We were required to render an account of all we knew; and as no useless labour was spent in attempting to make prodigies of us, girls who left St. Denis, after having passed through all their classes, were really well informed. Among other things it was a rule, that the pupils should be fordidden to enter upon the acquisition of a plurality of the ornamental arts at the same time. It was known to be impossible that any one could profitably study together music and drawing. It requires something of love to enable one to comprehend the arts, and that love divided dwindles down to mere *taste*, which produces nothing but mediocrity.

Every thing in education ought, it appears to me, to have a moral object, and it is not by overloading the brain with a thousand very superficial things, that we can hope to develope the intelligence of the soul. Children are made to repeat history like parroquets. What we learn concerning Clodion is, that he had beautiful hair; of Pepin, that he was a little usurper; of one of the Philips, of Valois, that he was hand-

some; and of the other, that he was brave. This kind of nomenclature is as fatiguing as it is useless; but history, rightly studied, is truly philosophical. It converts nations into grand theatres, where the working of our passions is exhibited; and in acquiring a knowledge of events, we become acquainted with the men who acted in and directed them. It is thus also with music. The knowledge of country dances, and of different airs, may awaken an echo of the dance in a young head; but the sublime symphonies of Beethoven, and the divine imaginings of Mozart, penetrate to, expand, and elevate the heart.

It is not true that women must needs be trifling or superficial. If their education is solid, frivolity will be rejected; and for this it is merely necessary that girls should be taught to adorn their minds as highly as they adorn their persons; and that they should learn in what nobility and greatness of soul consists, to the end that their bright foreheads should win respect, their eyes reflect goodness and love, and that every thing about them should yield a graceful interpretation of the gracious thoughts which govern them. Above all, no attempt

should be made to change their original nature. Each of our faults, well directed, may be converted into a virtue. Vanity may become a noble pride, and coquetry an amiable desire to please. Soften and subdue; but, if you would improve such young plants, do not forget that you must infallibly be wrong if you compel them to yield to the impure influence of hypocrisy.

But I am wandering from my twelfth year, and must return to the thoughts and recollections of the past—to the days of my childhood under the great cloisters of our ancient abbey. During the time that my mother remained in Paris, I saw her every Sunday, and those interviews were painful to me. She never came alone to see Madame Bourgouing. I was too proud to weep in her arms, for I never ceased to remember that it was her will alone which had exiled me from all my friends. Without complaining, one may suffer for events, for indifference; but to suffer through those one loves is incessant torture. I was unjust without doubt. My mother believed that my character would yield to the slavery of social life under that severe and monastic discipline.

Alas! my mind revolted instead of submitting; and under the yoke I learned better to appreciate the value, and to cherish more deeply the love of liberty. My school hours passed rapidly. Study was a pleasure rather than a task. I had ambition, and invariably occupied the highest places; but scarcely had the hour of recreation arrived when I threw off, and sometimes broke my shackles.

St. Denis was divided into two constantly hostile camps. The majority of the students, daughters of the old soldiers of the empire, venerated the idol of their fathers, and persevered in worshipping him. Several others, the daughters of emigrants, were violent royalists, and treated our deity as an usurper. The chiefs of the respective parties attacked every new comer, and taught them the songs of Béranger, or the hymns composed on the birth of the Duke of Bourdeaux. All our little legs were at the service of the strong heads of fifteen and sixteen. They carried letters, monopolized the punishments, and received for compensation a piece of tricoloured riband, an eagle, or, better still, the portrait of the little King of Rome. These things were distributed according to the

services performed. Each of the elder pupils had one or more adopted daughters, a sort of slaves, who sold themselves for a little protection. I could never submit to that necessity. I served and revolted as I pleased; and when I was very sad, I went and seated myself at the foot of a large tree, which recalled to my mind one of the lindens of my beloved Villers-Hellon.

If I was very unreasonable, Marie Daumesnil took part in my wild pranks and shared in their punishment. We had every thing in common between us. Our mothers had permission to see us both on their visiting days, and the same lectures were administered for the correction of our mutual faults. At night, when all were sleeping, we talked together of those from whom we were severed, of the holidays to come, of her brother and my sister; and Marie was unable to sleep without having one of my ears in her hand. When Marshal Macdonald came to visit the establishment, I was summoned before him. He put two or three questions to me without listening to the answers, and dismissed me with a slight tap on the cheek. Madame de Bourgouing was also full of kindness towards

me. She was an excellent woman, perfectly dignified with her *grand cordon* of the Legion of Honour, and occupied herself very little with the duties of her administration. She lost while I was at St. Denis a daughter-in-law whom she adored, and all her faculties were paralysed by the grief she experienced. I remember that what pleased me most in visiting the superintendent, was the possibility of descending alone the grand stairs, and traversing, without being in rank, the long cloisters which led from our class-rooms to our apartments. I mounted the steps four at a time, and then when I was certain of being alone, I skipped and pirouetted along, and arrived with burning brow and breathless gravity, which drew upon me a thousand questions, and the addition of a sermon on propriety, and the becoming conduct of young people.

I went sometimes also to see Mlle. Fleurot, who was a novice, and very good to me. She was an amiable person, without fortune, intended to become one of the ladies of the establishment; but she quitted us at a later period, in order to conduct a private education.

Towards the month of January, I was seized

with inflammation of the stomach; and my kind aunt Garat supplied the place of my mother in her numerous visits and attentions. She obtained for me a month's holiday, which I passed at her house, blessing my stomach for being so conveniently inflamed just at New Year's-day. It afforded me all sorts of pleasures. M. de Brack came sometimes to take me out for the day. Oh! how my heart beat when I leaped up beside him into his light tilbury. He carried me with him to make visits, gave me a dinner at the Café Anglais, took me to the play, and brought me back at night loaded with sweetmeats, toys, and keepsakes. I still recollect two of his visits with me. The first was to see M. Cuvier, where we were shown into a study, in which the great *savant* was half-asleep in his arm-chair, while a young and beautiful girl, his daughter, was reading to him a manuscript. I confess to my shame, that for a quarter of an hour I was kept yawning in listening to the conversation, which ought to have interested me; and that Mlle. Cuvier was obliged to arouse me in order to make me admire all the pretty little animals in her fine garden.

The second visit was to Mlle. Mars. Having

previously heard much talk of her, I was already full of admiration on entering her neat little hotel, situated, I believe, in the Rue du Mont Blanc. She was sitting in a chair—sitting as simply as the most undistinguished persons sit. She wore a large white dressing-gown, and her figure was in no respect striking. M. de Brack told her of my curiosity. She smiled, embraced me, and gave me some iced chestnuts. Greatly disappointed at having seen nothing that indicated a prodigy, I had no longer any hope but in my ears, and therefore listened attentively. She spoke, in the most delicious of all possible tones, concerning lands, speculation, funds, and the variations of their prices. I did not understand, but still listened to those sounds as to the music of an enchantress; and I seem even now to experience that sweet and painful sensation which recurs to us on hearing, under the prosaic measure of a country dance, the same affecting air with which Grisi, the evening before, drew tears from us.

During that month of recovery, I was taken to the Opera, and to the Porte St. Martin, where the *petites Danaïdes* appeared the most diverting thing in the world. But what struck me

above all, and rendered me most proud and happy, was a juvenile ball at the Palais Royal. When a tall laced footman came to bring me that princely invitation, and M. de Brack, who was at my aunt's, declared that he would give me a dress *à la Victorine*, I comprehended the delights of Cinderella, who was not less the pride of her godmother than I of my dear godfather.

The happy day of the ball arrived. It was first necessary for me to bear the pain of fifty *papillotes*, which were required to make my hair curl naturally; then my pretty lace frock was put over a figure which I had squeezed into the smallest compass; but I took courage to endure when I looked in my glass; and, lastly, my shoes, which were admirable, added their torments to all the other miseries which it cost me to be fine. We reached the ball-room at the moment when the Duchess de Berry opened the ball with a quadrille. She was dressed in a white lace robe, ornamented with white and rose-coloured feathers, and had a wreath of the same feathers on her head. Her dress, I observed, was handsomer than her person. I saw also Mademoiselle, the *grande Mademoiselle*,

who seemed to me a pedant of a princess. There were, moreover, the graceful princesses of Orleans; and I danced a galopade with the Duke de Nemours. Monseigneur, however, never kept time, but trod on my toes, and was always out of place, so that I was as much fatigued as flattered by that signal honour.

On being taken back to St. Denis, my head was so full of all my pleasures, and my imagination so strongly excited, that at the end of three weeks of regrets and dreams, I was dangerously ill of a brain fever, heightened by an inflammation of the lungs. My father was written to that there was no hope; and when my mother arrived post to see me, I was insensible. In my delirium I called for her; said that her absence had killed me, and I died by her wish and through the neglect of my father. I continued thus for a fortnight. My mother was so shocked that she determined on withdrawing me from St. Denis; and the first words that reached my ears on the return of consciousness were, that I was to be restored to my life of affection and liberty.

CHAPTER V.

As soon as it was possible to remove me, I found myself free, beloved, and indulged at Villers-Hellon; forbidden to worry my poor head with study; and, by the directions of M. Marjolin, I was to have no lectures, no lessons, and not the slightest contradiction. What a lovely summer! Intrusted to the care of my nurse Lalo, I passed my days in the wood; went to visit the brave peasants, carried fruits to the reapers, and changed for their black bread the white cakes I had for luncheon. Then at evening, I returned on their waggons, hidden in the midst of their sweet smelling hay or wheat-sheaves; while my grandfather smiled at my rural joys, my mother's eyes brightened to see the glowing colours which I recovered under the rays of the sun. Autumn brought

with it Mr. Elmore, and then my enjoyments became still more lively. I was to learn riding on horseback. I still remember my first lesson. I was placed on a pretty grey mare, and was allowed to take a turn or two round the court, accompanied with the advice, the fears, the anguish of the whole household. Afterwards Mr. Elmore obtained the great favour of conducting me into the fields. He fastened my horse to his by a long cord, and said to me, "Hold fast, and do not be afraid;" then passing from a walk to a trot, and from a trot to a gallop, and from leaping a small to leaping a large ditch, made me acquainted with the delights of a rapid chace, of dangers to be encountered, and of difficulties overcome. It was a long time before I made any disclosure concerning my perilous exploits; and when they were discovered, I was so good a horsewoman that there was nothing to tremble for but the past, and I was permitted to continue my exercises.

Villers-Hellon was very gay. We had plays there, or made pleasure excursions into the woods. Many persons of fashion were there; among others M. de Lassuse, a naval captain. He was generally considered a very elegant,

amiable, and intelligent man, and was exceedingly kind to me, though my friend, Mr. Elmore deemed him odious; I know not wherefore—but without doubt that he might differ in opinion with Madame Elmore.

M. de Montrond, an intimate friend of my grandfather, came also to see us for a few days. He was cheerful and agreeable; but unfortunately when he opened his mouth, I was sent from the room. It appeared that he had fled from his creditors, and that his heart had opened to old recollections when his purse closed against new debts. One fine morning, not knowing how otherwise to kill the time, he took a fowling-piece, and from the window of his chamber set himself to exercise the double barrels against our innocent ducks, all of which he destroyed. My grandfather, to perfect so good a joke, ordered his cook to send nothing to table during the next six days but the poor defuncts. M. de Montrond was obliged to eat ducks, roasted, boiled, with turnips, in stews, *en suprême*, and in pâtés, till, in order to forget both the ducks and his creditors, he was driven in despair from Villers-Hellon.

One day he was asked what he would do if

he had an income of five hundred thousand francs? "*Pardieu,* I should get in debt," replied he with the utmost simplicity. M. de Montrond had, with my grandfather, mixed in the best society under the Directory. They often spoke together, but in so low a voice that I was unable to hear, of Mesdames Roland, Tallien, de Genlis, and de Staël. The last was very partial to my grandfather, and used to say of him that he was the most intellectual of his brutes (bêtes).

In the month of November we went to Strasbourg. It was eight in the morning when we reached the hill overlooking Saverne. The rising sun, throwing his warm and purple rays on the frozen snows of the mountains of the Black Forest, caused their crests to glisten like pure opals on the blue robe of heaven. The vapours of the Rhine trembled at their feet in fantastic clouds, and the mysterious arrow on the steeple of Strasbourg shadowed its fixed magnificence upon this morning horizon. Like a new Jacob's ladder, they seemed to unite heaven and earth, and to bear even to the foot of our celestial Father, the cross, that symbol of all our sufferings and of all our hopes!

In the nearer distance were rich fields and handsome villages. To the right, was the chain of the Vosges, with their dark pines and gothic ruins; and at our feet, Saverne, grouped coquetishly along a pleasant slope, with its sparkling windows, forming *ogives* of fire in the midst of the cold green ivy which surrounded them, was sending the smoke from its thatched roofs to heaven, as the capricious homage of its awakening.

I was admiring with my whole heart that magnificent spectacle, when the tramp of a horse and a kiss of welcome from my father came to double my ecstacies. I mounted with him the seat of his carriage; and as we pursued our journey to Strasbourg, we rejoiced in ourselves and in nature, in the happiness of that reunion, and in that most beautiful autumn morning.

On my arrival, it was necessary to resume my studies, which had been interrupted for six months. With the roseate hue of health returned my lessons and lectures. I had a good piano-forte master; another of literature and history; an excellent military chaplain to prepare me for my first communion; and a master

of arms to aid me in acquiring agility and strength.

My father devoted to me all the time he could spare from his soldiers. We used to witness at the foot of the ramparts the exercises of firing; we went out on horseback, or, when the rain detained us within doors, we practised fencing together. I was not often strong enough to parry his thrusts; but, notwithstanding, I acquitted myself with credit; and when I was the victor, when my foil had touched one of his buttons, my kind father, proud and delighted, would recount to me by way of reward, the histories of Madame Guilleminot, Madame de Bonchamp, and other heroical women.

I passed my Sundays at the house of Madame de T——, who was an intimate friend of my mother's. After making the acquaintance of her daughters, we became inseparables. That family was one of the most amiable, and at the same time, one of the most considerable in Strasbourg. Madame de T——, still charming at forty, had in her youth been greatly admired, and lively even to a folly. With her first wrinkle, perhaps in order that one change might serve for all, she became a quakeress. Her

beautiful eyes no longer sparkled with love, except for heaven; and she now gained converts as formerly she had admirers. M. de T—— was a banker, neither tall nor short, thin nor stout, old nor young; and was possessed of a tolerable stock of good sense, of mind, and of heart. Madame de T—— had an eldest daughter, who would have been called pretty if her sisters had been less so; a son, Ferdinand, who was an excellent young man. My friends were two exquisite creatures—Jenny, beautiful as our visions of queens, when we believe them all to be tall and slender, with golden hair and black eyes, was proud and scornful, and possessed sufficient originality to give her the appearance of talent; and Marie, a laughing brunette, with large blue eyes, overshadowed with a silken curtain of dark lashes, was kind, frank, coquettish, and affectionate.

We passed together our days of recreation, under the superintendence of our nurse Ursula, in a field belonging to them, which was situated about a league from the town. We would brave the frosts of winter, in order to scamper into the garden, where sometimes we swung in

a light swing, as high as the tops of the poles which sustained it, at others, clambered into stilts, and raced each other through the snow; and then, when we were almost dead with fatigue, we went and lay down within reach of the warm breathing of the beautiful Swiss cows, which filled the sheds. There we talked of the pleasures of the morrow or of yesterday, and sometimes even ventured to indulge dreams of the remote future, of husbands, balls, and little boys and girls. In our calmer moments we did some pieces of needle-work, which we sold to our families for the benefit of unfortunate children.

Antonine, still too young to be of our grand trio, was able to execute our commissions in return for the patronage of our maturer experience. She was then a charming girl, sweet, endearing, pretty, and as much spoiled by my mother, as I was by my father.

My mother received us often in the evening; but the moment the clock struck nine we were sent to our chamber. My father could not endure to see us in the drawing-room like little dolls; and I myself held in abhorrence those

compliments and attentions, which seemed like a piece of additional service to the poor officers who visited us.

I had become very unsociable, not from timidity alone, but from pride at discovering the insignificance of my twelve years, and from my habitual indifference to all whom I deemed incapable of loving me for myself. Among those who did so, I must not omit the son of General Neigre, a lieutenant of infantry. When my mother went out of an evening, he would come to see us, change his sword for an apron, make for us excellent sweetmeats, and play at hide and seek, or blind-man's-buff. Then we turned everythings upside down, scaled the highest cupboards, or crammed ourselves into the most secret corners. What agitation and excitement was it when a footstep approached, when a breath was felt on our brow, when our eye caught the glance of another! What outcries, what laughter, when an unavoidable fall extended on the floor the poor blind one, who had bent too eagerly to seize its prey! What delight when my father, who did not much

mingle in society, returned unperceived to embrace us, and poor Colin Maillard,* seizing a riband or handkerchief, which we had fastened to that kind parent, cried, "I hold Marie!" when he held only the Colonel! Oh, those delightful nights! oh, those happy days!

Nearly every morning M. Neigre sent to us his large dog with a present delicately suspended from his mouth of some excellent cakes, and his attendant, who came to inquire after the health of Madame Niegre (Antonine). My sister climbed the knees of the redoubtable messenger and plucked his beard, as a prelude to the time when she should be able to pull the long moustaches of her husband; while I did the amiable to the dog. My politeness usually extended to the gift of a glass of milk to the beast, and a glass of wine to the man.

Antonine and I experienced considerable regret concerning our friend. He was put under arrest during a fortnight; and lo, wherefore! On Christmas Eve, the good citizens of Strasbourg hang from their windows the poultry they in-

* In France, the blindfolded person in blind-man's-buff is so called.

tend to devour at the grand festival. While the superb turkeys swing heavily from the windows of the wholesale merchant, the lean duck, hung at the casement of a poor family, is the sport of the December wind. That year, during the night, some mischievous person caused a little confusion among the consecrated birds. The poor pullet had become in the morning a gorgeous turkey, and no complaint was raised; but where the turkey had dwindled into a meagre pullet, loud and angry voices were uplifted against the wrong doer; and as our incredulous age is more apt to believe in the freaks of a sub-lieutenant than in the malicious agency of evil spirits, M. Niegre was consigned to prison.

That fortnight was a long one. In order to prove to our poor exile, however, that we were incapable of forgetting him, we ate dry bread for luncheon, and afterwards sent to him the little pot of *confitures de Bar* which had been assigned to us. Then at the promenade, we chose the deserted rampart which overlooked the windows of his place of confinement, and expressed to him, telegraphically, with our

arms, the regret of our hearts. All these things are afar off, yet still they are present with me.

Speaking of Christmas, there rests still in my memory a pleasant moment which the rejoicings of that period bring with them in that old Alsatian city. Several days before, the square of the Cathedral is covered with stalls furnished with every species of merchandise. Parents preserve an air of mystery, and children become sages, knowing that the good little Jesus is about to be born again for them, and that through him their most beautiful dreams will be realized. They no longer sleep, but count the hours, the minutes; and when the grand night arrives, three or four generations mingle their gaiety and their vows. A signal is given, a door is opened, and all are struck with amazement.

In the midst of a large saloon is reared a fir-tree, with its foot buried in an enormous cake, and its top reaching to the ceiling. A thousand little tapers sparkle amid its dark needle-shaped leaves; thousands of *bonbons* reflect them in the crystal angles of sugar-candy; beautiful little confectionary cherubs seem playing in the branches of the miraculous

tree, and exhibiting ribands and streamers inscribed with scriptural devices and maxims, to the astonished children below, who gaze with expanding eyes and cease not to marvel.'

Around the tree are grouped tables lighted with as many tapers as their owner numbers years, and laden with beautiful *surprises* which have been saved for him. Here are dolls, toys, sweetmeats; there eye-glasses, a bible, the portrait of a dear absentee; on the left, a gun, a light riding-whip; and on the right, love tokens, ribands, and flowers. Every where is joy, ecstacy, thanks, and kisses without measure or end.

Among the friends of my father, the best of my friends was Major Coger, an excellent man, who mourned the loss of his wife, trained canary birds, and loved us with all his heart. We went sometimes to take luncheon at his house, surrounded by five-and-twenty canaries, who enjoyed their freedom in the saloon. There were several beautiful little matron birds who with great anxiety strove to protect their nests even against our looks. There were also grave patriarchs who sang from earliest dawn, coquettes who scornfully crushed their grains of

millet and moistened their sharp beaks in a drop of pure water; and full grown birds who feigned to die on being touched with a blade of grass, tapped gently upon the clock when asked the time, plumed their wings, flew on to the shoulder and showered kisses without number on their master.

We sometimes also saw Colonel Lechesne and his wife; they were kind and indulgent, and had children nearly of our age, who, being sub-officers in my father's regiment, were always at our command, and obedient to our slightest wishes.

Eugene and Prosper came of an evening to give us lessons in writing; which ended, we passed to fencing, told stories to Antonine, or played at riddles, which Ursula always admired hugely without ever being able to solve them.

CHAPTER VI.

In the spring we returned to Villers-Hellon. I had now to attend for the first time at the communion, so that my time was more seriously occupied than formerly. I went frequently to church, learned my catechism, sacred history, and the gospel. My mother relinquished to me the visiting of the poor, where assistance was needed, or there were pain and grief to assuage. My grandfather at the same time made me his almoner, and I was very happy in being loved and blessed in his name. The day of the *Fête-Dieu* was fixed for my appearance at the altar, to undergo that great change when the child was to give place to the young woman, and when I was to be initiated to the mysteries of heavenly things, before opening the gates of life. Already the hour of duty was approaching, perhaps that of

error. My heart beat faster, its impulses grew stronger; the Christian virgin must be protected by a shield in her passage through the world; and the religion which has cradled her infancy, takes her soul, weak and pure, deposes therein its truths, its laws, and gives her a refuge against the joys, the sufferings of the world, which is about to claim her as its own.

On the morning of that solemn initiation, how radiant was the sun—how profound was my emotion! My mother attired me herself in the white robe of communicants, and placed in my hair a sprig of jasmine—symbol of those innocent thoughts, and of that faith which a priest the evening before had instilled into my heart. Then, before the solemn chimes from the steeple had called us to partake the blessing from on high, I bowed my knees before her, and she wept and blessed me.

The church was adorned with evergreens. The altar was hidden under clusters of lilac, acacia, and other shrubs, with garlands of bluebells and white daisies, twining their odorous stems around the tapers of the tabernacle; while the young communicants, trembling under the

folds of their veils, sang the praises of the Lord.

I am unable to express the mysterious agitation which took possession of me when the priest raised the chalice above our heads, and when the clouds of incense and of flowers saluted the Redeemer of the world! My knees bowed, my eyes closed, and at the moment when the communion came to convey the Deity into the sanctuary of my heart, it seemed that an angel touched me with the tip of his wing, and that I was about to die!

That great act of my life remains graven in characters of fire on my memory. Beside me I perceived the good and indulgent pastor of Villers-Hellon, who, though still young, had the tolerance of experience and of virtue. He never combatted with words the somewhat Voltairian ideas of my grandfather; but by his actions, he induced him to love religion, to respect its ministers, and almost to forget the sceptical ideas of the eighteenth century.

About the month of October, Charles X. made a progress through Alsace, and a letter from my father recalled us to him at that period.

The *fêtes* prepared for the king were magnificent. The wealthy Alsatian peasants, in their best costume, mounted on the small horses of their mountains, galloped around the royal carriage. Their wives and daughters, decked in all their rich laces and pleasant smiles, with their large blue eyes and their long fair hair, followed in light carriages; and at intervals, the cannon mixed its hoarse voice with the pious sounds of the bells and the hurras of the people.

At the door of the palace, a number of young girls presented to the king, with vows and flowers, the keys of his good city of Strasbourg. In the evening there was a magnificent ball. The windows and granite battlements of the cathedral were illuminated, and the Vosges sparkled with crests of fire on all the dark embrasures of their feudal ruins. Everywhere there was nothing but enthusiasm and love—every eye beamed with eternal devotion. Rejoice, oh princes! rejoice while you may, in these popular adulations! When the hour of exile and misfortune shall sound, you will look in vain for the smoke of that incense, for a regret on the brows, or a tear in the eyes, of your flatterers!

My aunt Garat came to pass a week with us, on quitting the camp at Luneville. That was a week of festivity and joy; for my father, adoring his beautiful sister, wished to surround her with pleasures, fêtes, and admirers. The elegance, beauty, and frank gaiety of my aunt, revolutionized all the unoccupied hearts of Alsace; and at her departure, there was nothing but regrets and unhappiness.

The sojourn of my aunt, brought us acquainted with a pretty little female, who was married to M. C. G. She was a graceful white and red wax-doll, opening and closing her eyes, saying papa and mamma; and even venturing, when the great resource of her intellect was pressed by her husband, to hazard a few very gentle and amiable phrases which had no pretension to meaning, but which exhibited the docility of the mechanical spouse.

Never have I seen the fanatic love of order reign so despotically as in that young wife. She wasted more time in arranging than in living. Madame G. had a delightful apartment; but no one must presume to step upon the carpet, to repose on the ottomans, or to turn over the leaves of one of her handsome gold

and silk covered books. She covered all those luxuries with gauze and paper, passed her days in a dressing-room, seated in a straw-stuffed chair, and reading a few old school-books. Dancing rumpled her light dresses; so she renounced dancing. Emotion was calculated to wrinkle her forehead, and banish the freshness from her cheek; so she drove from her all feeling and thought. In short, surrounded with all the enjoyments of life, she set her pride and felicity on preserving them from the pressure and ravages of time; and would have been perfectly happy if it had been possible for her to enclose in glass-cases her husband and children.

We went to pass the last fine days of autumn at the country house of M. de T——, who had a small pavilion situated on the banks of an islet, in which he passed his hospitable and cheerful life. We returned sometimes to Strasbourg for our lessons, and every evening my father came to forget in our society the solitude of his days. I have waited for him whole hours by the side of the road, when he would give his horse to his domestic, and we would return on foot—I hanging on his arm. I used

to embrace him a thousand times, in order to keep him as long as possible entirely to myself, and to retard his arrival—always too hasty, judging from my heart.

One day, alas! I awaited him in vain. His servant came alone. He went in search of my mother, who instantly set out, pale, and without embracing us. All that night I slept not. In the morning the carriage was ready for my sister and me; and when I asked wherefore, we were told that my father was ill, and desired to see us. At length, little by little, Ursula told us with tears that he had been hunting, that his gun had burst in his hand, and that he was seriously wounded.

On reaching Strasbourg, I wept with so much despair, that it was necessary for me to remain an hour at the door of my chamber, in order to stifle my cries. My poor father heard and called me. I threw myself on my knees at his bedside. "Marie, my child," he said to me, "you depress me by making me doubt your courage." He leaned his head on mine. I felt a tear, and comprehending that it was an adieu, my heart was broken! I know not what passed afterwards. When consciousness

returned to me, I was stretched on the bed of Madame de T——. I desired to arise to return to my father; but his emotion had been too strong, and the doctor had forbidden my presence. Oh! how I detested the impotence of my reason to govern my despair. I was far from my well-beloved sick one; and that through my own fault. Two days of anguish thus passed. On the third, in the middle of the night, we were taken to the bed of my mother. All was ended!

My God! what profound grief for a first grief! Why, so young, was my stay and my guide snatched from me? Why!—when you had prepared for my life such harsh and rugged paths? Did you fear that with him the earth would be too dear to me? Was he taken to heaven in order that he might lead thither my thoughts and my hopes? Lord! I am unable to sound the depth of thy designs; but for pity, if I have not failed under the burden of my cross, restore to me my father in your eternity!

CHAPTER VII.

After my misfortune, a gloomy darkness presided over my thoughts. Everything presented to me an image of death. All that I had loved with my father and by my father had become subjects of grief and affliction to me. My eyes sought his eyes; every door that opened made me start, as in the times when I had expected him, and my tears were my sole resignation. When I was alone, I reviewed in my heart the words and counsels of my father. I promised that I would be worthy of him; strong, though a woman, to soar above the sordid vanities and narrow exigencies of society. I promised him that I would be great and noble, not merely according to the standard of the world, but according to his ideas, and the remembrance of him, which became my con-

science; I henceforth took his device for mine—"Do what you ought, come what may."

Some times I took courage. I studied, and endeavoured to wrestle with the feeble and bad traits of my character. Then my grief re-awakened all at once, and I was astonished that I could still live; I was indignant to see so many existences still stirring around me when he was dead—he whom I loved so well!

M. Collard, my uncle, came at once to my mother, and wished to take us back to Villers-Hellon; but wretched money matters—which are always the miserable attendants of the deepest sorrows—caused it to be decided that we should remain at Strasbourg until spring. I greatly loved Marie and Jenny; all the family of T—— were very kind to me; but that decision nevertheless made me desolate. The places where I had been happy with my father had become insupportable to me. When they spoke to me of him, my heart was like to break; when they were able for a moment to cause me to forget him, I revolted against my obliviousness. The only person who felt as I felt was Major Coger. He had been appointed our deputy-instructor; and when we looked on

each other, when he embraced me, I knew that the same cherished regret lived between us, from our mutual regards and kisses.

Meanwhile, my whole life was not spent in tears. Time, if it fails to cure, will vary our impressions in spite of ourselves; and in its continual progress, as day succeeds day, it gradually restores to us our old habits, duties, and studies. My grief, more collected, took its sanctuary in my heart, and the smile of youth was already reappearing on my lips. But still a burst of gaiety wounded my recollections; and sorrow at such times returned in greater strength. Then I wept for him and for myself, and contemned the condition of forgetfulness appertaining to our poor human nature. The sight of the regiment made me ill; and the sounds of military music seemed to me a cruel irony, which disturbed the repose associated with the grave of my poor father.

My uncle Maurice remained with us two months. It was desired that he should marry Cécile de T——. He found her amiable; but to retard the horror of a decision, he requested time, that he might learn to know and appreciate, and thus to love her. My uncle passed his days at

the residence of Madame de T——; and when he had for some time followed his sentimental *âmie* Cécile among the stars, he came to play with us, like a school-boy who had finished his task. Desirous of subduing the pride of his future sister-in-law, my uncle occupied himself, especially with Jenny, embraced her tenderly, stole locks of her hair, teased and provoked her, and in short, took to loving her so well, and loved Cécile so badly, that the marriage was entirely broken off; and then there were two eyes sadly reddened for a long time.

All our lessons were in common. We had, as our master in history and for style, a young Protestant minister, full of indulgence and talent. I remember still the excellent lessons of M. Schmidt, his gravity during the time of study, and his complaisance when the hour of freedom struck.

My mother never went out, and we very little. I did not desire to do so; for, if in the street, I met one of our old gunners, who, with an air of sadness, raised his hand to his cap, my tears gushed forth in spite of me, and I was ashamed of that public emotion.

About this time I may remark, among the

visitors whom my mother received, was an elegant, amiable, and handsome young man, full of that chivalrous spirit which might be said to transform the man of our day into a hero of the middle ages. M. de Coëhorn had so much heroical vigour in his imagination, that he was placed far above or below actual life; and he disdained to translate his heart by actions conforming to the usage of our vile earth. Those who had judged him by his works would have deemed him absent, weak, and egotistical; but in thought he was full of energy, love, and self-denial. He spoiled Antonine, and was agreeable and attentive to me whenever I entered for a minute during the time of his visits; and I *guessed* that he was in love with Cécile, and that a marriage would soon stifle a remembrance.

I slept sometimes on a couch in my mother's chamber. One night, when I was unable to sleep, I heard her speaking. I raised myself to ask if she was unwell. She was dreaming—a name fell from her lips, and a horrible possibility entered my heart. I passed the remainder of the night in inexpressible anguish. At length, however, I revolted against my

suspicion, and resolved to see with my own eyes before speaking or suffering further.

The same afternoon M. de Coëhorn came to pass the evening at Madame de T——'s. We were seated around a work table. M. de Coëhorn began writing on some visiting cards, which he passed to Cécile de T——, who handed them to my mother, and afterwards became the agent of her answer. That action, which would have appeared to me so simple on the preceding day, appeared decisive at that moment. I grew pale, and hastened from the room in order to conceal my tears. Madame de T—— came after me, took me in her arms, and embraced me for some time without speaking. When my tears were somewhat assuaged, she told me that she understood the cause of my grief; that she had been the sincere friend of my father, and was pained like me to see him forgotten; that my mother was wrong, but that it was necessary to pardon her, as her heart was affected. I related to Madame de T—— my discovery, my presentiments, my fears; and she was so kind and so indulgent, that I went to sleep, praying to God for both her and myself.

The next day I went with my nurse Ursula to find the abbé of the regiment, who loved me as if I had been his daughter. He pitied my sufferings, but blamed me for presuming to judge my mother, saying, that "my good father would be displeased with that feeling, and that I ought to be gently resigned, and to hide even my tears." On my return, and as I was going to fling my arms round my mother's neck to request at once the truth and her confidence, I was stayed in an ante-room by hearing my own name pronounced by Madame de T——, who said to my mother:—"Marie is in despair; she does not like Eugène; her pride revolts against your marriage. You will be able to subdue her character only by sending her away from you."

"It would afflict me to come to a separation," replied my mother."

"Well, my dear Caroline, believe me, the love of your young spouse will not endure those two living remembrances of the past."

I was unable to hear more; the world stood revealed to me. I comprehended in that language of the "friend of my father," all that society contains of falsehood and egotism, and

resolved to conceal my pangs from Madame de T——.

Not daring to speak to my mother, and unable to exist under that weight of sorrow and rancour, I wrote to her all that was passing in my mind. She came to seek me; told me that she loved me, that she would love me always, and that she had spoken of all to M. de Coëhorn, who had declared that he would not consent to my being sent away, and that he hoped one day, not to be my father, but my best friend. He spoke to me himself openly of the future! I confessed to him all that I felt. He was not chagrined, but, on the contrary, told me that I had gained upon his esteem, and desired me to call him Eugène, in order to avoid a tenderer name, which it would have made me ill to use, as well as the word "Monsieur," which he disliked.

I have spoken in great detail of these events, because they operated decisively on my life, in forming, by their severity, my character and my creed. The death of my beloved father had brought me acquainted with sorrow: Madame de T—— had taught me what was society. I felt myself isolated from the world. Affection and duty made it a law to me to conceal my

secret afflictions. I was unable to tell my mother what I suffered; and I could not confide it to my most intimate friend.

Though never able to subdue my first emotions, I learned gradually not to allow my griefs to press on those around me, but shrouded them in the depths of my soul. I shared my joys with those whom I loved, and wept with the unhappy; but I should have been ashamed to have been surprised with a tear on my eyelid when it flowed for myself. My pride, habitude, and will, rendered me strong and collected when the storm came; and if my brain could not be constrained, my mouth had always a smile to reassure my friends, and to preserve me from the pity of the indifferent.

The spring which was to restore us to Villers-Hellon arrived. I ardently desired to quit Alsace; but the adieu which it was necessary for me to take of the cold stone which rested above my father, seemed cruel and almost beyond my strength. My grandfather received us with double affection. He seemed to desire that we should love him as well as the father who had brought us up; and for me, I was anxious to repose on him the thousand cares and tender-

nesses, which, until the day of our mourning, I had divided between my two fathers.

Lalo and Mamie spoke to me of him who was no more, with tears and regret. I found again his horses, which had become favourites of the good Briquet, my grandfather's coachman; and his dog, which sought him and whined when we pronounced his name. In all this there was a small alloy of evil among much that was good.

I then resumed my life of activity, and my mother occupied herself seriously with our education. She had unalterable patience, in the continuance and strictness of her lessons. I loved my mother exceedingly, but I also feared her a little, and, above all, I dared not express to her my affection. When I would have clung round her neck, and covered it with my kisses, she would say, "No exaggeration, Marie. The best proof of tenderness which you can give me will be to correct such faults as give me pain." This was perfectly wise, but it froze me; and I became less free without being less passionate, less independent, or less impertinent—three kinds of offence of

which I was frequently guilty, in despite of myself.

M. de Coëhorn came after us to Villers-Hellon. He made me labour to acquire German, and showed himself the same indulgent and tender friend as at Strasbourg. We had races on horseback, and some long promenades in the fields. He explained to me the beauties of poetry, to which, until then, I had remained an entire stranger; and told me of the noble, but Utopian visions of German philosophy.

About the month of August my grandfather had the happiness to receive at his house the family of Orleans, towards whom he bore the greatest love and veneration. With what care and *coquetterie* was our dear little château made worthy of that honour! A first arch of green turf marked the boundary of the property; a second reared its green colonnades on high from the avenue. The battlements of the court were hidden under festoons of leaves; the flocks were picturesquely disposed over the pastures which bordered the road; and the population in their holiday dresses were grouped along the passage of the illustrious guests. The

interior of the house was strewn with flowers, and the escutcheons and cipher of Orleans, formed of the blue-bells and daises of our fields, were supported by wreaths of oak and roses, which wafted their perfume into the dining-room and saloon.

The sun arose brilliantly, gilding the rich corn fields, and our preparations for the fête. About ten it was veiled with a light cloud; at eleven the cloud had become large and grey; we went from the window to the barometer and back, to confirm our fears and our hopes; till at last, with the first thunder clap and a heavy rain, the family of Orleans made its entry, soaked and splashed with dirt, into our little Villers-Hellon, recently so coquettish, but now ashamed of its sullied robe of flowers and festivity. The Princes travelled in a large omnibus, which was really magnificent. The Duke and Duchess of Orleans arrived a little wet, but without the least shadow of vexation. The Duchess had the sweetness of an angel, and bore on her brow those high virtues, which, after causing us to admire the woman, have made us venerate the Queen. The Princesses were amiable and pretty, but a little satirical;

and the young Princes de Joinville and Aumale were merely royal marmots, still under the rod of their tutor. Mademoiselle d'Orleans, who came also, completed the gratification of my grandfather, of whom she, above all, was the idol.

After breakfast their Highnesses, without fear of the rain, taking advantage of a gleam of sunshine, made the tour of our gardens and farms. They admired with great indulgence the handsome trees, the capital roads, and the flocks, and bestowed some approving words upon our pretty Swiss dairy. Everywhere on their passage they were surrounded with vivats and benedictions, and appeared happy to see those transports of love, which were the faithful echoes of the profound devotion of my grandfather.

During breakfast a singular scene transpired. The schoolmaster of Villers-Hellon, wishing to approach the Princes, had obtained of my old nurse an ancient dress, formerly worn by my grandfather, and having converted the pantaloons into breeches, he believed that he had metamorphosed the whole into a very fashionable livery. He looked, nevertheless, very

ridiculous; but was fortunate enough to be allowed by my grandfather to mingle with the valets-de-chambre who were to serve at table. Our grave master having, therefore, a napkin under his arm, looked with all his eyes, and listened with both ears; when suddenly, the Duke of Orleans asking for drink, he rushed forward, made a perilous and triumphant slide over some crockery-ware, and fell at the feet of his astonished Highness. On relating the feeling of enthusiasm which had occasioned the metamorphosis, and the fall of that firm supporter of the alphabet, he had the signal honour of being exclusively permitted to quench the thirst of the royal and popular throat.

CHAPTER VIII.

Autumn brought back with it our hunting parties and our English friends, with long rides on horseback, evenings at the fireside, and all the poetry of lingering foliage and the last fine days. Villers-Hellon, nevertheless, did not regain its gaieties and its intimate reunions. The marriage of my mother drew nigh. It was no longer a mystery, but still it was spoken of in whispers. A general embarrassment always accompanied that subject of conversation; during which, my grandfather would call my sister and me to the side of his arm-chair, take our heads under his arms, and play with our hair, in order that he might arrest, by a barrier of gentle caresses, the words which made us sad. The marriage was generally blamed; and I especially felt wounded in the most cherished religion of my heart, at witnessing the expres-

sion of the new affection of my mother. I suffered again from that mute reprobation of society which condemned her; and though I exhibited a lively sympathy with M. de Coëhorn, I had afterwards bitter pangs of remorse, and asked pardon of my poor and beloved father, till that continual struggle became an insupportable torment to me.

The wedding-day was a sad one. We were required to assist at the ceremony, without allowing a tear to steal from our hearts to our eye-lids; to reliquish our mourning, when we had become doubly orphans. We were expected to smile at that consecration of forgetfulness—to smile on abdicating our share of the heart of our mother, in order that a stranger might reign there. M. de Coëhorn was a protestant; the religious ceremony consequently took place in the saloon, where the work-table served for an altar; a gentleman dressed in black gave a coldly-learned sermon, and afterwards a simple benediction. Ought I to avow it? I was glad of that miserable ceremony—glad that my dear little church of Villers-Hellon was not used; that the tapers of its altar remained without flame; its censor without in-

cense—glad that the great crucifix, the angels, the virgin, the tabernacle, were not despoiled of their shrouds for that week, to bless the forgetting of my father.

When I was shut up alone in my chamber, I took the portrait of my dear regretted one. I covered it with my kisses, and promised that I would love him as much in heaven as on the earth. From that day I never pronounced that sacred name before my mother. I enshrined my treasure in the most secret recesses of my mind; and never permitted it to escape my lips, except on meeting with one of the brothers in arms, or one of the soldiers of that beloved father, and exchanging with them old remembrances and regrets.

We quitted Villers-Hellon, in order to take possession of the little château of Ittenwillers, and our own family, for a family to which we were indifferent, and strangers. Antonine, still too young to understand the sufferings and things of the heart, had forgotten the past, and lived perfectly happy in the midst of many recreations, much liberty, and many dogs, cats, and birds. She cared very little for Eugène, whom she did not love, and who loved not her;

and she sought refuge from his lectures, in the indulgence of my mother.

I was fourteen years old; but had always been exceedingly childlike in my actions, though sometimes I was sufficiently old in my thoughts. After having passed hours in leaping over the park ditches, running across the pastures after a butterfly, an insect, or for nothing, all at once I have become sad and motionless. The sight of my mother, leaning on the arm of M. de Coëhorn, made me ill. I was jealous for my father, of his happiness. When questioned, I made no answer; or was impertinent, being unable to tell the truth; but being punished or exiled to my chamber, I consoled myself with the proud conviction that I was suffering for my father. Usually, M. de Coëhorn obtained pardon for me. He laughed at my indomitable character; teazed me, permitted me to tell him everything in order to avenge myself; and played with me like a child, till frequently we became so noisy, that my mother was compelled to fly, or to banish us from the room.

We led a very solitary life. My mother and M. de Coëhorn experienced too much happiness in each other to seek the world—to forget them-

selves in order to please others. They were wearisome when not alone, living in themselves and for themselves. We saw only a few persons of the family of Eugène; his mother, good and virtuous, who had converted each of her habits into a little virtue, in order that she might have the right of neither derogating from nor sacrificing them to her neighbour; his eldest sister, married to M. de Bussière, full of sweetness and grace; and his two other sisters, whom I loved, and came to love still more eventually, for they were already amiable young persons, while I was merely a child. It needed time as well as experience to assimilate our hearts and ideas; and above all our tastes and habits.

Missing all the sweet distractions of Villers-Hellon, our studies were more closely followed; though I still retained that unfortunate independence which rendered ordinary duties at a set time odious—nearly impossible to me. During the morning, which was devoted to acquiring lessons by heart, I had the head-ache, was fatigued—indolent. I read through my book, but knew not the few pages which I was required to know; indeed I was never able to recite prose word for word. Reproaches and

constantly recurring punishments were unavailing to give me the memory of a parrot. It was the same with music. I adored it, and yet, when it was necessary to labour, watch in hand, at brilliant variations, full of difficulties and void of harmony, I became a mere machine of crotchets and quavers, studying without relish and without method. A single occupation remained a favourite one, though compulsory. It was that of making extracts from my readings, and writing imaginary letters to form my style, and which served me as vehicles to tell my mother what I dared not tell her face to face. According to the disposition of my mind at the moment of writing, those letters were sportive, serious, affectionate, impertinent, satirical, or sad; but some thoughts concerning those whom I loved, and which I would have concealed, having been recounted by my mother, and turned into ridicule as eccentric, foolish, and extravagant, that method of making a confidant was closed, or at least limited to me. My mother never combatted one idea with another. When she was pleased with me, and I would repeat something that had not common sense, she would say to me, laughing, "Be quiet, little

original! Embrace me; be wise, and do not philosophize." When, on the contrary, I had done anything to call forth her displeasure, she would tell me, with severity, that "having such false ideas, I ought to have sense enough to hide them, and that I should go and reflect on that in my chamber."

I understood all the charms of reading, to which I devoted all rainy days, and nearly every Sunday. The book, for which I had the strongest predilection, was Voltaire's 'History of Charles XII.' My cheeks reddened, and my heart beat quick and high when I read of all the victories of that hero, and I with difficulty restrained a tear on arriving at his defeats and his death. The memoirs concerning Napoleon were never able to satisfy me. The incense given to my *Demi-god* was not pure enough; it seemed to me improper that any should presume to judge his actions—cruel and odious, that he should be blamed in his reverses. The campaign of Russia, by M. de Ségur, made me sad and sick. It would have been impossible for me to read it twice. I was fond of Racine, more partial to Corneille, but loved Molière above all. 'Paul and Vir-

ginie' wearied me to death. Among discoverers, Fernando Cortez, Pizarro, and the buccaneers and pirates, sometimes reappeared to me in my dreams.

I never occupied myself with politics. I knew that at the Tuileries there was a throne, on that throne a king; and that the king had ministers, or more properly minds to act while his own was stagnant. Suddenly the cannon of July echoed over the Vosges, and the press sent among us the bulletins of a nation of heroes. It was incredible—sublime! In three days the work-people, young men, and children had avenged liberty, overturned the throne, and restored to France her tri-colour. They destroyed with one hand, and protected with the other. Without restraint in the fight, they grew noble and calm after the victory. As they had braved death, they also braved corruption, and laid down their arms, after having won the pomps and riches of the world, before even thinking of their bread for the morrow. What great days! what glorious men! It seemed that God had created them expressly that their deeds might give its noblest page to our history.

That revolution, that glory, caused me to comprehend the liberty of the people, the love and pride of patriotism. Louis-Philippe became king; all the sympathies of my family congratulated his election, though to me he seemed scarcely young enough for our young France. I could have desired a little war and some grand victories. At the tribune the orators of the left won my admiration; but, in short, my head was exalted, and my ideas became so republican, that my mother thought it prudent to interdict to me the journals, and to forbid me occupy myself with politics; without being able, however, to efface the deep impression which those great events had left in my mind.

CHAPTER IX.

In the month of October, my grandfather, who had never passed a whole year away from my mother, recalled us so earnestly to him, that it was necessary for M. de Coëhorn to quit Alsace, his agricultural operations, and his family, in order to take us to Villers-Hellon. The winter was pleasantly passed there. We—Antonine and I—were beloved and spoiled. It was desired to pay us with large interest the debt of caresses which had been accumulating for a whole year. My mother, being under medical treatment, did not leave her arm-chair; M. de Coëhorn, therefore, charged himself with nearly all my lessons, and we had long rides on horseback, or long walks on foot together. Sometimes even we had small hunting parties, in which I was the spectatress of his high achievements. M. de Coëhorn was to me as a brother,

and laughed at my independence and simplicity. With him I could venture to tell all that was passing in my mind, to express my fondness for a strange idea, and my indignation against those which are received. He was amused to see me so childish or so philosophical, initiated me into all the reveries of German poesy, and afterwards laughed at my fifteen years for endeavouring to reach alone those brilliant and fantastic stars.

In the spring, my mother gave us a charming little sister. She put her into my arms, and desired me to love and protect her, and I promised with all my heart to do so. Though I was jealous, for the remembrance of my father, of the affection exhibited by my mother towards M. de Coëhorn, I should have been ashamed to have experienced the same feeling against a poor little baby.

I have not yet spoken of the delightful neighbourhood of Villers-Hellon, though it ought to be known, in order to comprehend all the pleasures, all the friendly enjoyments, which were united in that happy little spot of earth.

Not far distant—about half-a-league—is situated the château de Long-Pont. Strangers ad-

mire its tall and picturesque ruins, its arched cloisters, the beauty of its waters, and the extent of its park; while those who have the pleasure of being received there as friends, forget those natural beauties for the noble inhabitants who are the soul of the place. The Viscount and Viscountess de Montesquiou have a large fortune, and are richer still in virtues, happiness, and their illustrious birth. They often abandon Paris for Long-Pont, which they love as their creation, or as a little Eden which they have formed for their only son. I believe that Fernand will be worthy of inheriting that beautiful retreat, and will deserve the love and the blessings which the benevolence of his parents will have gathered around him.

Madame de Montesquiou was greatly attached to my grandfather, not merely as a friendly neighbour, but from an assimilation of heart and mind; and she in turn was the idol of my grandfather, who put his eighty years in adoration at her little feet, which were so graceful, that she might have contested the insolently exclusive reputation of small feet claimed by the Chinese, and before her large eyes, which were sweet as those of Providence. M. de Mon-

tesquiou was a grave, serious, well-informed man, who was wholly occupied with the education of his son, and the embellishment of Long-Pont. He had still leisure, however, to be an excellent neighbour, and a host perfectly agreeable and hospitable.

Further off in the forest were Montgobert, belonging first to General Le Clerc, then to the Princess of Eckmühl, and lastly to Madame de Cambacérès, whose pretty person bore testimony to her relationship to the Borghèse family; Valsery, a charming property belonging to an old friend of my grandfather; St. Rémy, to M. de Violaine, superintendent of forests, and father of a beautiful bouquet of girls and a single boy; and lastly, Corey, an eccentric little château of as strange a construction as was the mind of its occupant, Madame de Montbreton, daughter of a flour-factor of Beauvais, and wife of one M. Marquet, whose father had been—I have heard say, *valet-de-chambre*, but I wish for politeness to write—*steward* of some great nobleman. She had been imprisoned during the *Reign of Terror*, and, founding her nobility on that persecution, wished to be not only a poor but a noble victim. In order to adorn the name of Mont-

breton, taken or found, I know not which, she purchased, under the Empire, with her beautiful floury farthings, the title of Countess, and at a later period obtained for her husband the place of master of the horse to the Princess Borghèse. At the return of the Bourbons, she glided into the royalist ranks, became a grand lady, had young lady companions from several quarters, forced ancestors upon all her little dogs, and embroiled herself with my grandfather, whose yeomanly rank and liberal opinions were to her insupportable. At the revolution of 1830, she fled from Paris, and recovering, under the strong influence of fear, the memory of her old friend Collard, she came to place herself under his protection. I had heard much talk of her; but she put to shame the most exaggerated of her biographers.

The first time that I was at Corcy she was shut up in a little quilted boudoir, in which the cushions prevented her from hearing the village bell tolling for the dead. At the end of an hour she made her appearance, with a smelling bottle at her nose and a perfume box containing chloride in her hand, to inform herself, before entering, if I was in good health; if

I had long had the measles; and, lastly, if any epidemic sickness prevailed at Villers-Hellon. Satisfied with the answers which were given her, she crossed the threshold of the door; approached me, sprinkled me slightly with vinegar on all sides, and kissed me on the forehead. Having been told that I was a musician, she made me sit down to the piano, and desired me to play a *galop;* then rushing to her son, forced him to dance with her.

"Mother," said Jules, breathless, and endeavouring to stop her, "you will kill me!"

"Encore, encore!" she replied, dragging him on; "it is excellent for the health."

"But, mother, I shall fall through fatigue; you put me out of breath."

"Come on! It is necessary for my digestion!"

And as Jules still stood panting and half dead, she threw herself on a sofa, and said to my grandfather:

"Collard, I am most unfortunate! You see how unnatural are my children; they refuse even to dance a *galop* to repair the health of their mother. Ah! I have good reason to complain!"

Madame de Montbreton passed her life on the high roads, quitting Paris whenever there were two sick persons in her street, and flying from Corcy, if a woman there had the fever. She merely existed for the purpose of preserving herself from death; entertained a horror against all who were ill or unhappy; and refused to see her friends when they were in the mourning. She one day sent her son and daughter-in-law from her house because she had discovered some pimples on the cheek of the little Cécile, which made her afraid of catching a disease of the skin.

After pestilence, the greatest terror of Madame de Montbreton was her husband, a little, round, and inoffensive being, whom she pensioned off that they might never see each other. She loved her children well enough, but treated them like slaves, on whom she could daily inflict a thousand little domestic tortures, which they however bore with incredible indifference. She detested her daughter-in-law and Madame de Nicolaï, with whom she had absolute personal quarrels. The manias of Madame de Montbreton were innumerable. At Paris she would eat no bread except that baked at Villers-

Coterets; and at Corey, she had water sent from Paris, refusing to drink any but that of the Seine, saying that the water of the country contained a cement which built up little monuments in her stomach. One day, one of her teeth, which were very loose, nearly choked her; the next day she had all of them drawn!

The sons had not shared in the political broils of their mother. They became a little less royalist in our liberal little castle; and among all the agreeable things which they found at Villers-Hellon, they reckoned as the most solid, that of being released from their mother. MM. de Montbreton, with some gaiety and attraction, had an ignorance much more indisputable than their coat of arms; and a talent at saying, better than anybody else, the newest and most extravagant absurdities.

Eugène, the youngest, had married Mademoiselle de Nicolaï, of whom we knew very little. She had never made more than a nuptial visit to my grandfather, though he had been closely connected with the Lameth family, and M. de Nicolaï, formerly *préfet* of Laon. Eugène was what might be called a good boy, who loved his friends; but would not sacrifice

to his friendship the pleasure of stamping them with ridicule, and of having a jest at their expense.

It is said that while Jocko, the illustrious monkey, was the rage, Eugène de Montbreton learned to imitate him; and was so successful in the saloons of the aristocratic *faubourg* St. Germain, that the Duchess de Berry, hearing of him, expressed a desire to witness the exhibition of his talent. M. de Montbreton had the honour of an admission to enact the monkey in the little apartments of the Tuileries; and the gracious princess recompensed him by sending him the cross of the Legion of Honour!

M. de Montbreton thought the 'History of Fernando Cortez,' converted into an opera, very badly INVENTED, and firmly believed that La Ferté Milon was the native country of the great Homer.

But notwithstanding all that, and perhaps on that account, Eugène was exceedingly amusing, and we liked him. We were glad of his visits, which always brought us some hours of gaiety; and as he ridiculed his friends, his friends ridiculed him, and that without scruple or rancour on either side.

For our *soirées dansantes*, my grandfather added to these every-day neighbours, the sub-préfet, his wife, some old friends, and a few of the *élite* of Soissons; and my aunt Garat, on quitting Paris, drew after her several graceful and coquettish female friends and some gentlemen, who were accounted at once amiable and fashionable.

About the period of the first snows, and of stag-hunting, we usually had a visit from General Daumesnil. He was one of the old glories of the empire, with a heart of gold, a soul of iron, and the benevolence of a child. His fine head, his look, full of energy and power, his frank expression, and the affection which he retained for the memory of my father, are religiously engraven on my mind. After the Revolution of 1830, they restored to Vincennes its brave and faithful commandant with his glorious wooden leg. At the entreaty of General Daumesnil, my mother permitted me to go and pass a few days in his fastness.

There I again met Marie, the old friend of my childhood and school-days, metamorphosed into a young woman, occupied solely about dress, having abandoned all serious employment,

lest she should be fatigued with study; she had renounced even the cultivation of her fine and graceful talent for the piano, in order to preserve the delicate whiteness of her pretty hands. She still, however, possessed the affectionate heart which she had inherited from her father, but she had already begun to employ with success all the little supernatural graces of her mother. Madame Daumesnil was amiable, and had mind, blended, it may be, with a little affectation in voice, manner, look, and idea. She was an eminently incomprehensible woman. Having been pretty at fifteen, she was unable to console herself at finding that she was much less so at forty. She loved her excellent husband and her children, and vainly sought, without ever meeting, the brother of her soul.

CHAPTER X.

In the spring the cholera came to spread excitement through our poor France. It did not spare Villers-Hellon. My good grandfather was admirable for his forethought and courage. He sent for a young physician from Paris, transformed his château into a dispensary, where the unfortunate sick found all that might solace them, and timid healthful persons came to seek wholesome preservatives. It was above all things difficult to dispel the fears of contagion in the peasantry, among whom fright degenerated into panic terror. In order to inspirit them, it was necessary to be calm, while looking upon the most cruel and fearful sufferings; to hear, without blenching, that the scourge had marked a new victim; that death had relieved a poor struggler.

Succour was sent among the cottagers, for the

consolation of orphans, widows, and childless mothers. All this was wretched; but the self-devotion of my noble grandfather was blessed in the end with success. Some of our good peasants were preserved, a great number of our sick were cured, and all our poor dying patients received the attentions of their families, the aid of the physician, and the consolations of religion. Our good pastor, M. Dufour, conducted himself as an apostle; and multiplying himself with the danger, became the providence of three villages.

The health of my mother, extremely weak, required a change of air and of place. We departed for Alsace with the brother of M. de Coëhorn, Secretary to M. de Sebastiani, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and who fled, affected with one of those terrors which render the imagination sick, display themselves in green and yellow on the visage, and oppress the moral sense like the saddest of fixed ideas.

M. Edmond de Coëhorn, younger than his brother, had a heart suffocated with an egotism which had become chronic, with great gravity, a strange mind, and an eccentricity approaching, in some degree, to insanity. On reaching Itten-

willers, he surrounded himself with all the known preservatives against the cruel epidemic which he dreaded. He ate nothing but rice; laboured from morning till night at planing boards, for exercise; went from the saloon when a newspaper was brought in; was seized with cramp in the stomach if any one spoke of pain in the bowels; and truly disquieted himself at having healthy looks, profound sleep, and a formidable appetite.

"Believe me," said he, with doleful conviction, "these appearances of health are dreadful; you may laugh, but one is never so exposed to death as in this state of quietude; allow me to complain, I have dangerously good health."

After having fatigued his limbs for a long while in his joiner's work-room, he sat himself down to music. He composed charming waltzes, and very bad romances; sang well in Italian, and executed marvellously the second part of all my *nocturnes*. He was most amiable towards me, more amiable than he had ever been known to be. Perhaps I should have been flattered with these first devotions; but Eugène having told me one day, laughing, that I was his *pill against ennui*, my young-womanish self-love revolted

against the anti-choleric virtues which had gained all these attentions.

Ittenwillers was exceedingly animated during all that summer. A sister of M. de Coëhorn, married in Russia, having come to pass some time in France, every one was anxious to celebrate her return, and to gather around her once more all the joys of the past in the land of her birth.

Madame de Dunten had been buried for six years in Livonia, in a perfectly lone château, seeing her husband and the snow for nine months, and her husband and a few leaves during the rest of the year; with an excellent fortune—that is in plains, forests, and serfs, but without a penny of money. She was a charming woman, full of mind and heart, but had grown somewhat savage, though hers was a kind and eccentric barbarity.

Madame de Dunten had estates several leagues in extent. Her château was immense, and contained a hundred domestics, among whom were tailors, shoemakers, and hatters, in fact, slaves of all those professions which are indispensable to the wants of life, as also of those which minister merely to the requisitions of luxury. Nothing had to be purchased; food, and the materials

necessary for clothing, were obtained from their lands and flocks, and all that these could not supply, was procured at Riga by the exchange of their produce; Madame de Dunten, consequently, was unable to habituate herself to her resurrection in our narrow little life of civilization, which, she said, stifled her.

Among the friends whom we oftenest received, were several young ladies and gentlemen: Mesdemoiselles de T——, my old friends, now become so beautiful and so scornful, that I found in them much more to admire than to love; their cousins, three very tedious nullities; MM. de Buissière, who had mind, information, and gaiety; and lastly, M. de Menneval, son of the private secretary of Napoleon, who had a fine little face, a pretty little figure, a pretty little foot, a pretty little soul, and an immense love for Mathilde de Coëhorn. Mathilde, a charming young woman, resembled one of the beautiful German Madonnas, in softness and suavity of expression; and if she was a little more animated than a statue, she sometimes forgot to live through *nonchalance* and *ennui*. She was an excellent musician, and a good and tender creature; not that she had so good a heart

for loving those who loved her, but so well reflecting their affections, that she might have been mistaken to do so. Her soul was like the beautiful Venetian mirrors, which faithfully reflect the features, expression, and smiles of those we love, while present; but the smooth surface of which is incapable of restoring in absence those we have lost.

Sophie, the youngest sister of M. de Coëhorn, had an excellent heart, and much originality. She would have had much good sense, but for her constant abstraction, and a profound pique against an unfortunate Roman nose which engrossed all her face; and the magnificent proportions of which had only the immense defect of being unnaturally large.

I lived somewhat uncivilized in the midst of all that world; preserving all my tastes and habits of overgrown childhood — the natural consequence of my education. My mother had often repeated to me that I was ugly, the truth of which I readily perceived, on comparing in the glass my own head with the pretty, curly head of Antonine; I therefore vowed to acquire sufficient sense to cause my failings to be overlooked, and amiability enough to render me

pretty. All my days were devoted to study. During the hours of repast, and those of the evening reunions, I made myself imperceptible; and at ten, a look from my mother sent me to bed. I was so habituated not to occupy others with my insignificant self, that it appeared to me most surprising when a stranger deemed himself bound to say an obliging word to me. One day M. Edmond de Coëhorn having kissed my hand, I was so astonished, so vain, and so pleased, that I thanked him.

During all that summer I had the gratification of reading several of the romances of Sir Walter Scott: that reading enchanted me. I was no longer alone: my imagination had friends in Fergus, the Master of Ravenswood, Flora Mac Ivor, and Diana Vernon—that frank and noble girl whom I had made the companion of my dreams and the sister of my thoughts. Every night before sleeping, I called her near me, or went in search of her, galloping beside her when, on her white mare, she hunted over the heaths of Scotland. She told me her joys and her tastes, which were mine also; she spoke of her heart, and I felt, that if ever I loved, I should love as she did.

That intimacy between my idea and that conceived by the genius of Walter Scott, lasted a long time. It even exercised great influence over my life several years later; and still, to this moment, I evoke as a sweet remembrance, and a phantom friend, the noblest image created by the Scottish poet.

The German lessons which M. de Coëhorn gave me, suffered a little from the animated life which had invaded our solitude; but I studied much alone, and went to seek counsel and encouragement from one of his aunts, whose little mansion was only separated from Ittenwillers by a lawn.

All the new family of my mother were kind and affectionate towards us. Madame de Fontanille, who had understood that we required, above all things, to be loved, had opened her heart to us with parental solicitude. She called us her dear children, and we called her our dear aunt, like her nieces. It would have been impossible to be more indulgent—to forget oneself more entirely for others than she did. When I had obtained permission to pass my morning with her, I was well pleased. Her eyes not permitting her to read,

I placed mine at her service, and to recompense me, she related to me her charming and simple translations of Schiller and Goethe, when her verses were so original, so perfect, that they seemed transported rather than translated.

Madame de Fontanille had no children, but a husband as good as she was kind, the winning of whom was a little romance. M. de Fontanille had quitted Gascony, to lead, at Paris, the joyous life of a bachelor. Loving all the pretty things of this world, he kept his adoration for pretty little feet; so he busied himself in making a collection of all the darling slippers which had merited his enthusiasm, and he wore always over his heart the gay satin shoe of his most recent love. Business called him to Strasbourg. There he encountered, in a drawing-room, set up on the gilt sphynx of an enormous gothic andiron—a living foot, smart, charming—of admirable purity of form, and not longer or thicker than a biscuit *à la cuillère*. Astonished, and ravished at the same time, M. de Fontanille procured an introduction to the mother of the damsel with that delicious little foot. He saw it every day, and became impassioned with it, till, discover-

ing that a provincial shoemaker, called in to make a new shrine for his idol, was waiting below for orders, he took fright lest the craftsman should bruise, wound, or, most dreadful of all, dishonour it by giving it a corn! His disquietude was fearful, insupportable — and, in order to save that little *chef-d'œuvre*, of which he wished to become lord and master, while making it his god, he offered up to it his name, his heart, and his hand! He was accepted; and after his marriage, M. de Fontanille went nearly every year to Paris, in order to have made, under his own inspection, new shoes for his wife.

CHAPTER XI.

When autumn came, with the vintage and the cool days, rather gilded than heated by the rays of the sun, we made long and delightful excursions to the mountains. The Baron Hallez, who possessed several of the richest hills of the Vosges, with their forests, their pastures, and the antique ruins of their feudal castles, afforded us several clambering mornings, which were enchanting. We got over the first part of the road on little mountain horses; then, when we reached the steep rocks, where the path was practicable only for herdsmen and goats, we confided our safety to our own limbs, and each, with more or less of address and agility, surmounted the ascent. There were falls, reddened faces, and panting hearts; rocks scaled with dexterity, and mountain streams crossed with skill. Every false step was hissed;

every bold and graceful leap applauded; till about noon we reached some old turret, in which we found, *by chance*, shade, couches of moss, and an excellent dinner.

Most frequently, some wind instruments, distributed in the underwood around, formed delicious echoes; the musicians executing their national and attractive *lænder*. At first all listened, then danced with the gaiety and spirit of mountaineers; halting only under excessive fatigue, or when the clouds, empurpled by the setting sun, warned us to depart; and then there remained to us scarcely sufficient strength to enable us to glide over the dried needles of the pines, to the path where our horses awaited us.

These rides enchanted me. I was unable, from pleasure and impatience, to sleep during the nights which preceded them. The two sons of M. Hallez were ordinarily my chevaliers. They were seventeen or eighteen years old; and were sensible and agreeable. They were, like me, in a category by no means marriageable; and we could enjoy, therefore, without fear of compromising ourselves, the most rapid rides, the most imprudent attempts, and the

most silly laughter. As they danced very badly, however, I abandoned them at the ball for my father-in-law, or M. Edmond de Coëhorn, both excellent dancers, who made me whirl with the utmost rapidity, and lifted me like a feather.

The Alsatian dances are a composition of the waltz and galopade. The rhythm, at first very slow, becomes more and more rapid. You *balancez*, turn carelessly with your partner, then the arms entwine and form a thousand graceful passes; you retire, advance, keeping time by striking the soles of your feet; you appear to fly by the velocity with which you turn, then, when the last *accord* is heard, the gentleman lifts his partner from the ground, with a somewhat savage cry, and deposing her on the earth again, bows gracefully his thanks and an adieu.

In the month of December, M. Edmond de Coëhorn, appointed secretary to the embassy at Constantinople, took his departure, loaded with commissions, and our tender wishes for Madame de Martens, who was already gone to rejoin M. de Martens for six months in the East—he having been named ambassador from

the King of Prussia to the Sublime Porte. The health of my poor aunt had cruelly suffered from that journey. We knew her to be sad and ill, and were often very painfully depressed concerning her. M. de Coëhorn, therefore, promised to be attentive and kind to her for our sakes.

We passed all that winter at Strasbourg. I was introduced to several persons, and made my entrée into the world; that is, I had the honour of seeing my name written on the cards of invitation, of going to a few balls, of receiving a few salutations in the street, and having a few general words addressed to me in a drawing-room. I always loved dancing, doubtless, because it was motion; and, perhaps, also because I danced well; because I heard it repeated around me; and because our self-love plays always a small part in our tastes. To make amends for that, the prattle of the ball-room was odious to me. I had no stock of ready-made phrases; and my mother had forbidden to me so large a number of subjects of conversation, that it was scarcely possible for me to appear otherwise than a fool. The rain and fine weather made up my vocabulary; and these exhausted, I had to remain

mute like the most stupid. Sometimes, wearied with my nothingness, and with all those shackles imposed by propriety, I threw off the yoke for a second, and dared to tell my partner that I was, somewhat by inclination, and more by order, a dancing machine; praying him to be indulgent, and to remit for a few years, the shock of our imaginations and thoughts. Most frequently, however, I resigned myself to my part without giving warning; and endeavoured merely to put in my toes the small grain of spirit which I might not have in my mouth. If I should add to these ball-room vexations the sermons of the next day, on the text of a somewhat whimsical bearing, a too sleepy air, or too animate a look, it may be understood, that I accepted with regret my dignity of young woman, and why it was that I remained so long a time somewhat untamed and childish.

The society of Strasbourg had been flourishing in past days, but the Revolution of July had brought about a necessity for the fusion of classes, which had paralysed gaiety and good feeling. The proud nobility, pretty generally ruined, readily accepted the invitations of rich commoners, but carried to their balls an air of

vain condescension, as vulgar as it was transparent. On their side, the wealthy citizen *parvenus,* in going to the houses of their adversaries, smiled at the tarnished liveries and faded blazonments of the noble pretenders; and, in their desire to oppose the pride of purse to that of ancestry, seemed to think that they had coined sense, education, and good-breeding.

In a few houses, nevertheless, the frank and cheerful cordiality of ancient days remained, and luxuries of the heart took the place of those of wealth and vanity. In their balls, the national waltz triumphed over the quadrille; *galops, cotillons,* and *boulangères* succeeded each other till day; when at the moment of retiring from so much pleasure and fatigue, potato-salads, and *pâtés de foie gras* were served up to refresh both dancers and danseuses.

Among the authorities, General Brayer alone occupied himself with the pleasures of those with whom he lived. He gave excellent balls, and his daughter, Madame Marchand, did the honours with perfect grace. M. Marchand, the first valet-de-chambre of Napoleon, was well informed, but sad and reserved; and bore in his

looks the expression of a great recollection and a great regret.

At the beginning of Spring, our poor little sister fell sick; that was a fearful grief to my mother, and a profound sadness to me. I had never loved Jeanne as I loved Antonine; but my affection, which was directed towards the child rather than the sister, was still great and almost maternal. How often have I rocked her on my knees—how often dragged her little carriage through the alleys of the park—racing more rapidly because she cried with her little merry voice, "Again, Marie! again, again!" because I saw her pale forehead redden and become animate, and because if I fell near her, out of breath, she threw her two little arms around my neck, embraced me, and covered me with flowers from her favourite bouquets.

No actual disease was exhibited, yet every day stole from the poor little creature some of her strength and fresh colour. Every day she grew more beautiful, more adorable. It seemed that the child was being transformed into an angel; and her poor mother might have understood, from the perfection of her treasure, that it

was about to return to heaven. What despair! To feel herself powerless to preserve the life she had given; to see her child grow pale, suffer and die on her bosom! And that agony of adieus, without a possibility of illusion, lasted for six months; when Jeanne expired without pain, like those beautiful stars which sparkle at night in the firmament, grow pale with the dawn, and disappear in the morning.

When the little cradle remained void of our angel, my mother was stricken with a grief that was almost beyond reason. Sometimes our caresses made her sick, and she would repulse us with violence; and at others, seeing us weep with her, she kissed our tears, and seemed to draw from them consolation for herself. The more distant became the remembrance of that dear child, the more she was attracted towards the living. Jeanne had loved to sleep with her little hands in one of my ringlets—my mother made me cut off that ringlet and give it to her. Jeanne loved Antonine above everybody, and Antonine became more than ever the favourite of the bereaved mother.

They had buried the little coffin of the child under a white rose-tree, not far from the house.

My mother and M. de Coëhorn were there incessantly. Their griefs thus fed, grew daily more violent. It was necessary to drag them from Ittenwillers to Villers-Hellon, where my aunt Garat came to rejoin us; and we were presently all reunited by the arrival of my aunt de Martens, who had been driven from Constantinople by the *mal du pays*.

The occupation attendant upon that return, which gave back to my mother her sister and most intimate friend, made her well. She introduced to her M. de Coëhorn, and told her all the pleasures and sufferings which had succeeded each other in her heart, since the day of their separation. Her regret, in ceasing to be the sole chord that remained to vibrate in her bosom, became a calm sadness. Her health no longer gave us any fear; but, on the contrary, we had hopes to see speedily on her knees, another little Jeanne!

My aunt de Martens had been away for seven years from France, from her father, her family, and friends. The day of her return, therefore, was a grand day of embracing and weeping for joy—of looks compounded of smiles and tears. Seeking for the children whom she had loved,

she found them become full grown young women—was all astonishment and felicitation; questions and kisses were exchanged in abundance; and I again repeat, that was a grand day.

I had always entertained great love for my aunt, and a firm belief in her good sense; and now that I was able to put my faith to the proof by reality and reason, it became every day stronger, and more perfect. Madame de Martens is not only an amiable and intellectual woman, but is still more potent for a boundless charm and attraction. Her thoughts, in order to please, assume all forms, and display every degree of grace and liveliness. Amid the world, her profoundness is veiled; but often a word reveals it, and the unsuspected echoes escape. Hers is a mind resplendent as the most beautiful opal; imagination sparkles there, and the heart has there its rays.

CHAPTER XII.

My two cousins were welcomed, and beloved among us. They were both pretty, had both brought from Germany, Italy, and the East, a little strange perfume, which rendered them deliciously eccentric. Hermine, fair and pale, was the very type of the ladye of a poet's dreams. Bertha had two great eyes, a turned-up and mutinous nose, the heart of an angel, and the wit of a demon.

The model-education of my cousins was the dearest thought and care of their mother. After her system, they learned their thoughts as we learned our lessons. They had, officially, every taste, idea, and belief of their mother; a perfect demeanour, reviewed and corrected daily; talents, replete with profound knowledge; and, lastly, a governess *whom they governed*, and

who was a kind of responsible minister, tedious to herself, and still more so to those over whom she had nominal authority, being by turns the scolder and the scolded.

My grandfather was happy in that complete reunion of all his family. His three daughters, still young, still beautiful, and always kind and good, did with as much benevolence as grace the honours of his house. His son reigned over his fields, his woods, and even his shepherdesses. His granddaughters awakened around him a thousand echoes of pleasure and gaiety, and all those young heads which he cherished, and which adored him, seemed the benediction of his beneficent life, the crown which heaven had placed on his white hairs.

Study separated during the day the small from the larger children; but the evening, which brought us together again, was passed in dancing and sports of all kinds. We disputed with each other the piano, the arm chairs of my grandfather, and the private conversations of my aunt De Martens, who, always extended on the sofa, devoted to us quarters of hours of intelligence, caresses, and sometimes sermons.

My aunts left for Paris at the fall of the first snows, and it required several weeks to habituate me again to live alone without regret and ennui. Fortunately my mother had promised her sisters to pass a few days at Paris in the middle of winter:—that to me was a source of consolation and hope, and afterwards a charming reality.

During that sojourn in Paris my two aunts shared the care of amusing me; and my first pleasure was a little ball at the Tuileries, where I royally fatigued myself. I knew nobody. The friends of my aunt De Martens were grave men, politicians, diplomatists, *anti-dancers* by nature and position; so, after admiring all the luxurious fairies who surrounded me; the handsome dresses and pretty faces; after having endured the vexation of finding myself rivetted to my chair, through scarcity of dancers, while my feelings were excited by the quadrilles of Tolbecque, I went to bed, fatigued, dissatisfied, and well-pleased to repose myself at last from the pleasures of others.

That evening left on my mind a superb contempt for the world. Philosophy, grafted on wounded vanity, being of the most obstinate

kind, it was necessary to drag me as a victim to a charming ball given by the lady of Marshal Suchet.

The kind words of that gracious lady, who told me that she well knew and highly appreciated my father, were my first joy; then the beautiful eyes of my aunt Garat, who was my protector, drew dancers around me. I met M. Ernest de Ganay, whom I had often seen at Villers-Hellon, who talked with good sense, was somewhat mischievous and very amiable; and altogether I was quite as much gratified there as I had been dissatisfied at the Tuileries; and on my return, I already found myself renouncing, with less austerity and good faith, Satan, his pomps, and his works. During that evening M. de Ganay, who had constituted himself my *cicerone*, pointed out to me several of the most fashionable women. I admired the beautiful Duchess d'Istric, and still more the Duchess de Plaisance, pretty, buoyant, and transparent as one of those delicate *demoiselles*, cousins to the butterflies which dance in the spring on the crystal surface of the brooks.

My aunts sometimes took me to the Opera. I saw *Robert le Diable*, in which Nourrit,

Madame Damoreau, and Madame Dorus were the skilful interpreters of that great thought of Meyerbeer. I was enthusiastic! It seemed to me that the songs were worthy of heaven; perhaps not of ours, but of that of Mahomet, where the chosen of the prophet intoxicate themselves with hydromel and harmony, and are sorched with the black eyes of their divine houris.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the month of March my mother was dangerously ill. M. de Coëhorn had gone to Alsace to superintend some business, and the care of our poor invalid rested with me. I passed my days at her pillow; my nights at her feet on some cushions. I alone had *the right* of giving her drink, of raising her head, of warming her poor feet in some medicated water. I alone received her thanks and her smiles, and had her ardent kisses. I surprised her eyes following me with tenderness, till at length she came to love me as much as I had dreamed she might, and I *adored* her.

Six weeks passed thus; but then M. de Coëhorn returning, it became necessary to relinquish his rights to him, and to fall again upon the chilly and stern affection of the past.

My heart, which had expanded to tender effusions, was then once more sadly deceived, and sank back upon itself. All its independence, all its strange thoughts reawakened, and my imagination, which had already created to itself a life of participated affection, descended with pain to the sordid realities of existence. I had then no experience of things or of men. I believed that the principle of my actions was noble; but I was unreflecting, imprudent, wishing to act as I dreamed, never following the track beaten by opinion, and preferring a precipice to a wheel-rut. Not occupying myself with indifferent persons, without wishing to do so I deranged their combinations, and often my own were upset by the contact. In short, I marched into life with my head raised too high to take care of my feet, observing the smallest cloud in the heaven of my thoughts, not perceiving the rocks and dangers that beset the path of reality, and obedient solely to my first impulse! My mind is lofty, self-willed, and obstinate; and ever the slave of its only counsellor, my heart.

Elizabeth came into the world with the first flowers and the first fine days of spring, and bore

a slight resemblance to our poor little Jeanne whom she succeeded in our affections; but she had more strength and less of her delicate and sylph-like beauty. Too weak herself to attempt suckling her, my mother hired for her a handsome nurse, with glossy black ringlets, superb eyes, a questionable character, the most exaggerated pretensions, and a rooted conviction of her own infallibility. My mother not only became herself this woman's slave, but insisted on the most implicit obedience on our part to the will and pleasure of her favourite, who lost her milk, and half-starved herself with hunger when she fancied herself slighted.

Never was Villers-Hellon so gay as this summer: there was a continual round of hunting excursions, balls, and delightful family-parties. Our bevy of young ladies was augmented by Mlle. de M——, a very agreeable young person, strictly brought up by her mother, and adored by her family, but whom we could not help upbraiding for a superfluity of accomplishment and good-breeding, which did not add to the pleasure of our meetings, as young girls of seventeen.

Madame de M—— was a leader of ton of the

Fauxbourg St. Germain, of lively and elegantly aristocratic manners. She was reputed malicious; I, for my part, always found her good-natured and amiable, with nothing more sarcastic about her than her little snub nose, slightly indicative of a shrewish turn.

There were besides, at Long-Pont, the Countess de M——, a benevolent dowager; and General Count de M——, a merry and kind-hearted old friend of my mother, an admirer of the sex in general, and of my aunt de Martens in particular; whom, perhaps, he might have formerly married, but from the uncertainty of his position and his limited fortune. He was at *that* time sub-lieutenant, and his income *one* thousand livres per annum.

Villers-Cotterets was the head-quarters of the hunters, their horses, dogs, and followers. Among the sportsmen were the Duke of Valençay, the nephew, and a joint heir of Prince Talleyrand, a share of whose wit he had already inherited; M. de Vaublanc, and MM. de L——.

I applied to Jules de Montbreton for information respecting the latter. "It is a charming family," he replied: "there is Blanch, who

draws with exquisite taste; Henry, the eldest son, is the picture of health; Jules, the second, frolicsome as a kitten; then Arthur, the gentle squire of his lady cousins; and lastly, Pulcherie, gifted with an extraordinary memory. M. L. de L——, their uncle and father, is a gentleman of the old school, who will display to you all the gallant attention and polite graces of the beaux of Versailles and the Trianon. I promise you as a partner in the first quadrille this accomplished Vestris, and for the second his son, who is as haughty as you are sometimes; and is, moreover, gifted with all your own horror of compliment and ceremony. So make yourself killing, throw back your shoulders, and, above all, endeavour to make your nose as white as possible."

I had the honour of dancing with M. L. de L——; and, if his manners were somewhat antiquated, his perfect amiability, his desire to please, and his respectful attention even to a young girl, bespoke the true gentleman, and quite won my heart.

As for M. Arthur de L——, he seemed to revere and love his father above all. His careless reserve and rather haughty manners

had their origin in simplicity of mind; and there was something so gentle in his hearty voice, and in his open eye, so timidly bashful in the drawing-room, and so animated in the ardour of the chase, that I made him my hero; and for two months his image often crossed my thoughts, and cost me a blush.

Madame Henry de L——, granddaughter of Madame de V——, came to spend the hunting season at Villers-Hellon. She was pretty, and simple as a blue-bell of the fields, but sacrificing to her fanaticism for truth the nothings of polite society. She was the terror of all the affected and over-pretending of her acquaintance, who pronounced her vulgar, capricious, and half-cracked; while in truth she was accomplished, agreeable, and witty; and with two or three faults, would have been perfect.

Before returning to Alsace, let me speak of Madame de Montbreton, with whom we had formed the most intimate acquaintance; and whom I admired with perhaps an excess of enthusiasm. She was handsome, and her large black eyes seemed to transfix you as she spoke; while, with her intelligent play of features, she had the gift of soothing by her kindness, or making you

smart under the effects of her vexation, according to the caprice of the moment.

Madame Montbreton was very agreeable in conversation; her learning was far less formidable than her pretensions implied; her contempt for her husband supreme; her lively manners, tinged with hauteur in society, and perhaps too familiar and ardent in a *tête à tête*. The world judged her with asperity; I loved her for her kindness to me in my inexperience, and for taking notice of one whom no one else had deigned to observe. I acknowledged her superiority without analyzing it; and proud and happy in her professed friendship, my self-love opened to her my heart.

I very frequently spent whole days with her; and although there never was an intimate exchange of thoughts between us, which would have been impossible, I listened attentively to her discourse, almost as if to an oracle. I replied frankly to her questions; and she seemed struck by the strangeness of some of my notions, which she attempted to combat. In such cases, however, I was always dumb; having been unaccustomed to reason, except on matters almost indifferent to me. Habituated to preserve in

the secrets of my thoughts all those ideas not in strict accordance with the received and tolerated uses of society, they had become in some sort my idols; had I begun by defending them, I should have ended by wishing to impose them. To avoid becoming dictatorial, I remained silent, well knowing that a young lady should be attentive to others, without pretending to attention from them; and that she should use the sense which Nature has given her, in listening graciously to others, and in holding her tongue with proper spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

My sorrow was extreme at parting with all my friends and the delights of Villers-Hellon, to return to Alsace, where we had scarcely an acquaintance. Elizabeth was lovely, and blooming with health; my mother and M. de Coëhorn adored her; yet in the little treasure so ardently desired, they neither seemed, nor were, perfectly happy. In what, then, had their existence changed? In all—and in nothing! We lived as retired and solitary as heretofore; excepting that my mother, who suffered from ill-health, went out even more rarely, and that M. de Coëhorn was much less with her. At night, when the moon was in heaven, and silence on the earth, they no longer leaned together against the half-opened window; they no longer heard each other although speechless; were no longer animated but by one mind and impulse. Plans

were discussed, opinions combatted. My mother had lost the bright halo of love that had formerly glittered on her brow; M. de Coëhorn that happy satisfaction which had so gracefully adorned his noble features: she was less young, he seemed to grow younger. Alas! and do the affections of the heart wither like the flowers of the fields? Love, does he yield up his dreams, his hopes, his joys, to the winds of custom, which scatter them afar, as the last leaves of autumn are dispersed by the chill autumn blast? Oh, God! it must be indeed a grief immense, to witness thus the agonies of one's dearest affections!

My poor mother, on losing her happiness, became stricter with me, and more indulgent to Antonine. M. de Coëhorn was often ill-tem-tempered, and created troubles to obtain the amusement of being angry. I accepted, very unwillingly, the part of victim; and, preserving my position of equality and fraternal impunity, I bravely struggled with M. de Coëhorn: if he was unjust, I became impertinent; if he scolded, I ridiculed his anger, and sometimes made him laugh at it in spite of himself. When I saw our fireside the scene of mute repining or angry

debate, I seated myself at the piano, or compelled my step-father to walk with me, or even ventured to propound one of my out-of-the-way notions, which would draw my mother from her sombre reflections to scold me or to read me a lecture.

I had now become a tolerable musician; was said to have a good voice, but to sing very badly. In fact, I used to run through, with the facility of a bird, the scale or the most difficult of cadences; but as to singing with expression tender or impassioned airs, that was impossible. I dared not give utterance by my voice to the impressions of my heart, neither could I adopt those which pass current in society; and I sang so badly the romances which my mother sang so sweetly, that I used to make her laugh as much as she made me weep.

I was now growing into womanhood, and yet was treated more than ever as a child; the little fantastic tricks and follies by which I expended the life which boiled within me were encouraged and fostered. On horseback, I sought, created, and braved a thousand dangers; on foot, I could never resist the pleasure of leaping a hedge or ditch, or both, with no

other object but that of protesting against a barrier or an obstacle in my path; and while such hoyden feats were tolerated or pardoned, the least independence in my opinions encountered angry opposition, and they unceasingly wounded my self-love, in order to repress or extinguish it. But all was useless. If I consented to be esteemed ugly, my pride revolted against the idea of being thought a simpleton; I held my tongue, since that was exacted; but I wrote and read with ardour, accustomed my mind to poetise the minutest actions of my life, and preserved it with infinite solicitude from contact with any thing vulgar or trivial. To this I united the error of so clothing reality as to render it less unamiable to my imagination; and the still more grievous one of preferring the beautiful to the good, of fulfilling the excess of duty more easily than duty itself, and of preferring in every thing the impossible to the possible.

My mother determined to spend the winter at Strasbourg; she constantly complained of ill-health, and thought herself far worse than did her doctors, who attributed her sufferings more to nervousness than to disease. The

fashionable winter set in auspiciously; three or four evenings a-week were devoted to entertainments, and the advance of the season was expected to be gayer still. Society in Strasbourg had made several valuable acquisitions. There were the Marchioness of Caraman, so graceful and talented that she might have been suspected of a fairy godmother; M. de la F——, who had a fine head, then a—a very fine head—lastly, a superbly fine head; finally, M. Theodore de Bussière, who had recently married a gentle and lovely person, the daughter of M. Humann.

One day, early in January, I was taken seriously ill. I had made up my mind to considerable suffering rather than miss a ball, on which I had calculated for some time with pleasure. After several hours' dancing, an icy wind breathed at my departure on my burning brow, and the consequence was, a violent and alarming attack of the measles the next day.

Dread of infection drove all whom I loved from my couch; I was banished with my nurse to my bed-room, where I suffered in solitude, listening for the sound of a voice, the rustling of a gown, the measured tread of my mother,

or Antonine's lighter step, in terror of dying without seeing them again, and bereft of all consolation save the forlorn hope of sharing my father's grave, and of joining his soul in Paradise.

Three weeks passed away in this manner; I was out of danger, but still very weak, when I learned, from an imprudent word exchanged between my physician and my attendant, that my mother also was stretched on a sick bed. I would have risen and flown to her chamber, to lavish on her my cares; but that was impossible, my disease was contagious. I would have given her my life, but my presence would only have added to the danger that threatened her. Oh! the anguish, the anxiety of the succeeding days! I interrogated with equal anxiety noise and silence; day and night I sat by the cruel door that separated me from her, insensible to the deceptive words of hope with which M. de Coëhorn and Antonine in vain sought to comfort me; there were tears in their voices as in my presentiments; I felt the whole truth; my tortures became insupportable, and, fearful for my reason, they at last conducted me to her couch.

Alas, my poor mother! all colour had fled from her features; her lips were blue, and her head reclined upon its pillow. She was no longer in pain, nor felt the burning kisses we imprinted on her wasted hands; her fixed look was turned on M. de Coëhorn, and she seemed to be counting his tears, and to gather them for a treasure in eternity. For one instant she thought of her children, and beckoning Antonine, embraced her several minutes; then turning to me, she passed her fingers slowly through my hair, parted it from off my forehead, gazed with an angelic look at my profound sorrow, and said to me: "Poor Marie! I loved you!" I covered her with kisses of happiness and anguish; but my breaking heart was bursting with sighs; they were obliged to tear me from her arms, and I went to hide myself behind the curtains. With her head supported on Eugène's breast, she spoke to him with her eyes, with her soul, seeming to derive a strength from her despair; our sorrow gave her pain, while her own prevented her from suffering.... Several hours passed in this agony.

About daybreak, a piercing cry from Eugène announced to us that she had left us.

After a day of frightful anxiety, which almost unseated our reason, I found it impossible to divest myself of a fixed idea that took possession of my mind, and pursued me constantly. I was determined to take a last look of my dead mother. Gently placing on her bed Antonine, who had gone to sleep in my arms, I slipped unperceived into the chamber of death. Oh, God! how strikingly we feel thy power in death! At the sight of my mother, whose features already wore the holy beauty of immortality, my tears ceased to flow, and I knelt at her feet as before a saint. I had come to pray over her and for her; but when I saw her, I prayed to her for ourselves.

"Forgive me, sainted mother!" I ejaculated, "for not adoring you sufficiently in your life. Look into my heart, and behold how it has suffered; pardon, beloved mother, guardian angel, pardon ——"

I would have severed a lock of hair, but dared not; she seemed to me sacred and inviolable as the consecrated host. I imprinted a last kiss on her forehead, and after freezing my lips, that kiss seemed to chill my life, and I was obliged to be carried from the room.

The calmness I had recovered in praying to my mother, deserted me directly I was alone. My abandonment and isolation in the world did not yet occur to my thoughts; she, she alone occupied and tortured them. Alas, alas! while she had been with me, I had murmured against her severity, and had in mind disputed her instructions and advice. I had preserved more affection for the memory of my father than for her; her happiness had made me wretched; the late remorse of love overwhelmed me with its terrors. Could we, during the lifetime of those we love, picture to ourselves the grief we shall feel at their death, how much more zealous should we be for their happiness, how much more prize every fleeting hour of their sojourn among us!

M. de Coëhorn's despair was dreadful; without shedding a tear, his grief found vent in loud cries of anguish; he tore his hair, dashed his head against the walls, kissed on his knees the chairs on which she had sat, her books, her piano, the carpet she had trodden under her feet; he embraced Elizabeth with adoration, and, pressing us by turns in his arms, exclaimed in heart-broken accents, "My poor children, and

you also I shall lose!" Tears choked his utterance; and we answered him, also sobbing, that we loved him, would love him always; that the heart of our mother had left him to our hearts.

When we were a little calmer, Eugène addressed me; and, taking my hands in his, conjured me to assist him in fulfilling the last will of her whom we wept. My mother had expressed her wish of reposing in the same grave with her infant Jane; on the spot where Eugène would reside, and which was sacred to the memory of their happiness. This communication overwhelmed me; I had hoped that death would unite on earth as in heaven my heart's treasures, and that kneeling at my mother's I should be praying at my father's grave. This new grief struck me dumb.

"Marie, Marie!" said Eugène, "will you not obey your dying parent's last wish? It is necessary to obtain the authorization of the bishop; it must be demanded in my name and in yours. You see my heart is broken. I have nothing left me but a tomb: can you envy me that? It will be a new tie between us; you will come again to me to weep at her tomb: I

ask it of you on my knees, for her sake and for mine!"

"My dear Eugène, hear me, I entreat you. The deepest and most hopeless grief will yield to time; a few short steps alone will separate the living from the dead; and if at some future ——"

"Cease, dear Marie, cease! your words overwhelm me. Why not live beside a tomb, when one has placed all his hopes, all his love, in heaven? In mercy I implore ——"

"Eugène, let her will be done."

Accordingly my mother's remains were entombed with those of her infant Jeanne. Rose-trees bloom over their grave, and two crosses of unequal size, overtopping their branches, image the blessed hope of immortality rising superior to the pain and grief of parting.

All M. de Coëhorn's family behaved with unexampled kindness to the orphans. Madame de Coëhorn took us home with her for two months; and sad and wearisome appeared the long wintry days that brought round the approach of spring, for us to return to our family. I lived only in the letters that deplored with me my poor mother's loss: those of my aunts an-

nounced to us the same reception as if we had been their children, which they declared we already were in their hearts. Their affectionate language, intended to console our grief, rendered mine still more poignant; my gratitude was boundless, it stifled me; I would have preferred to live all my life alone, and to sink under its burden, to the obligation of making it thus weigh on others. My grandfather's tender love was my only consolation: he would love me for myself, and not as a duty; I should become the staff of his old age, and the living reminiscence of his poor Caroline; he would sustain my life, and I should enliven his. The heart is proud, and wishes to return all, even before receiving anything. I knew the extreme kindness of my aunt Garat; I anticipated at her hands, nothing short of maternal care and solicitude. How should I return them? A mother's love is repaid by one's kisses, by one's talents, by one's successes; a good action is her sweetest reward; a noble sentiment will light her brow with pride, the world honours her, and God blesses her in her child's good qualities. But what could I do for my aunt? I could only love her, and to love her was so easy.

I was consoled in my deepest distress by Madame de Valence, the noble friend of my grandmother, who had been my dead parent's godmother, and loved me dearly from my infancy; she came to weep with me, and to suffer me to love her as much as I had learned to respect her. I regarded her as one of those guardian angels who protect the grandmother, mother, children, and grandchildren, who smile on the joys of a whole generation; and if they have no power to prevent tears, have at least the privilege of wiping them away. Madame de Valence invited me to spend a few of the winter months with her, and I accepted the invitation with gratitude. My aunt De Martens took charge of Antonine; and to finish her education, which had been rather neglected, it was determined that she should be placed for some time in a convent. St. Denis was proposed; but such was the horror of my recollections of that dreary pile, that I opposed the scheme strenuously. They made it a question of money, but I offered to augment her little income with part of mine, to enable them to send her to a respectable boarding-school in Paris, where there are not six hundred hearts and minds to form and to

improve. I believed that they could not possibly refuse my proposition, which was the accomplishment of a right and of a duty; for being the elder, my sister's happiness was in some sort my natural care. Madame Adelaide settled the question by taking upon herself the care of Antonine's establishment, and my heart remembers, and will ever preserve the remembrance of her kindness: it is sweet to be protected by those we love, and the gratitude that blesses the protection extended to a sister, is very holy, and very easy to bear.

CHAPTER XV.

The summer immediately following my poor mother's death, I passed at Villers-Hellon; all who surrounded me there, mourned for her in their thoughts; my grandfather loved me with all the affection he had borne my parent; my aunts were most kind, my cousins sisterly; and my grief became calmer, without being less profound. My aunt Garat took particular charge of me; I gave her an account of each day's employment; and she blamed whatever displeased her in my character or manners, ordering and prohibiting with maternal authority.

My excellent aunt, married at seventeen, was still a girl when she became a mother, and added to all the joys society had lavished at her feet, that sweet joy which comes from heaven. The child instead of being pretty and blooming, as my aunt had dreamed, and as she became later,

was at first sickly and pettish, and bitter medicines and long lectures were requisite to improve her health and disposition. My aunt, who long governed her daughter according to her system of absolute government, was somewhat more lenient to me; she was often full of affection and tender indulgence; but when her conscience reminded her that she had adopted me as her daughter, and had duties to fulfil towards me, she became severe indeed in her advice, gave to my thoughts humiliating interpretations which wounded my feelings and my pride; then, when she surprised me in tears, she dried them with her kisses, and made me forget the unkindness I had suffered. On the whole, and I repeat it again, my aunt was most kind; even when my heart bled at the sharpness of her maternal admonitions, I could not help doing justice to the sentiment by which they were inspired. My affection and gratitude never failed me; but to shield my poor thoughts from censure, I stifled their voice, and learned to submit the most trifling actions and sentiments of my life to her will and opinion. I was in want of a friend, but in vain I sought one around me. Among my equals, my cousin Garat, whose imagination was the

more ardent as it was the more repressed, had a good heart, but a less praiseworthy character; she was naturally candid, but compelled to dissimulate; was too exacting, and too variable in her friendship. Hermine de Martens had no affection for me; and Bertha was still only an interesting child. As for my sister, I loved her with mingled feelings of solicitude and affection, belonging rather to a mother than a friend. She had an excellent heart, and invariable sweetness of temper; and there was in her character an utter forgetfulness of self, which, while it contributed to her present, assured her future happiness; and I, who was fully sensible how unhappy I was in my thoughts, now so mournful, and now so bright, that they deprived reality of all pleasure; I, who suffered so often at bending those thoughts to the exigencies of real life, dared not share them with her; and acknowledged that God had made her better and wiser than her unhappy sister Marie.

Sometimes in my days of unreasonable grief, I had doubts of myself; I asked myself if I was not mad, whether the life of joy, pleasure, and oblivion, that escapes sorrow in escaping thought, was not preferable to my way of life. I sought,

but always in vain, to resign myself to the weight of the leaden mantle imposed by society on those who accept its yoke, and sought solace in the desire of acquiring knowledge. My aunt approved my love of study, telling me that cultivated talents and accomplishments were very proper in a marriageable young lady; while, for my own part, I only saw in the development of my mental faculties a means of making myself beloved, and adorned my mind for the sake of the being as yet undreamed of, but whom I vaguely hoped time would bring to complete my existence. Whenever I wrote a noble sentiment, I repeated it aloud *to him;* on conquering a musical difficulty, *to him* I sang my triumph; I was proud in dedicating *to him* a good action, but *to him* my thoughts never dared revert when I was dissatisfied with myself; in a word, the object of my dreams, was not a man, but an angel, a being formed to *love me.* I carefully abstained from speaking to my aunt of my beau-ideal; I sounded her once or twice, and had been told that nothing was further removed from my dream than the reality of a husband; that to indulge such ideas was fatal to young ladies, who should only aspire to a position in society,

fortune, pleasure, rich bride's-clothes, and brilliant jewels, and that all other wishes, if unfortunately formed, should be stifled even in thought. How lamentably can man's noblest destination, duty, be denaturalized by society, its usages, its demands. One would sometimes say, that it consists but in the sacrifice of the faculties which are not those of the greatest number, and that we must expiate the crime of possessing the little wit one has, by directing it according to the opinions of those who have none. God has not lighted in his creatures the light of intellect that it may be extinguished in holocaust on the altar of mediocrity; every man, ay, and I dare to think, every woman, should carve out a route according to his or her character; and progression should be our first necessity, as our final duty.

My happiest hours were spent with my grandfather; I became his favourite, and there arose between us an interchange of affection and thoughts; he lived in memory, I in hope, and each contributed to soothe the other's present. My grandfather had prepared for me a little room near his own: they were only separated by hangings; in the night we were able to converse, and in the morning I had only

a step to take to give him my first kiss. While he took his siesta, in which he oftener reposed than slept, I played to him, or read aloud, or, seated at his feet, listened for the twentieth time to one of his favourite stories.

This excellent old man was goodness personified; he lived only for others, was happy in making others happy, and enjoyed nothing that he could not share, or give wholly away.

Kindness is to the heart what study is to the mind—an enjoyment which can alone fill the void which the passions or misfortune have left in life. This noble sentiment teaches us to live for others, when to live for oneself would be too painful; and it permits us to indulge in the sweet emotions of the heart, without the sphere of our own destiny.

I frequently went, during the summer, to Long-Pont, where Madame de Montesquiou welcomed me with extreme kindness; she even suffered me to love her, which I did with all my heart. I often sought her advice, and submitted cheerfully to her benevolent reproof. I had only to interrogate her past life, to see my way clearly. Her brother frequently visited Long-Pont, with his wife and children, who

had been so dear to my mother; he behaved with great affection to his orphan niece, and promised her his friendship and protection. The Marquess Jules de Mornay is a man of high character; a lord by birth, he became a man, and preferred the nobility of his mind and heart to the nobility of his emblazonment. Summoned to the Chamber of Deputies, he did not constitute himself the representative of the great and privileged of this world, but the stay and representative of the people: to the service of his native country, and of the unfortunate, he has devoted a life which fate had destined for one of pleasure. His mission is a noble one, and the glory of it is his own! M. de Mornay had espoused a daughter of Marshal Soult, a woman of benevolent character and dignified manners. When she entered the drawing-room at Long-Pont, leading her two children by the hand, the pride of a Roman matron shone on her forehead, and her jewels were as fine as Cornelia's.

Early in the winter my hand was demanded in marriage by M. de L——: I cannot express the profound emotion I experienced when my aunt De Martens conveyed to me his message

of love, the first I had ever received. A new power revealed itself within me: my heart beat quicker, pleasure sparkled in my eyes, and on my forehead; I was honoured—felt grateful; and although I had no desire to marry M. de L——, I regarded him as the precursor of the great happiness I had dreamed. I had only seen him once or twice: he was young and handsome, sang admirably, and possessed agreeable manners. Had he whispered to me his love before announcing it to my aunt, I believe I should have accepted him; but there was something so matter-of fact and reasonable in his declaration, it was so impossible to poetise it, that I could not find it in my heart to enter the reality of existence without first seeing some of my cherished illusions blossom and fade. It would have seemed to me that I was burning some of the fairest leaves of the book of my destiny, to arrive the quicker at the last page; and I could not conceive of an end without a beginning.

M. de L——'s fortune was an appointment of between four and five thousand francs a-year; and my own wishes according with the wishes of my family, his offer was respectfully declined.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the month of December I left Villers-Hellon to take up my quarters in the pretty room destined for me by Madame de Valence. My grandmother's generous friend received me as if I had been a dear daughter; all my tastes had been consulted, all my wishes anticipated. I found an excellent piano awaiting my arrival, and a personal attendant in an old sister of Mamie's, a kind-hearted creature, excessively devout, who remembered my grandmother at sixteen, and had nursed in her arms some of my oldest and dearest friends and relatives.

I was very happy in the midst of the charming family circle of the Rue de Berry. Madame de Valence was surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, the crowning glory of her old age, the beloved links which united her in memory to the joys

of the spring, summer, and autumn of her past life.

There were the lady of Marshal Gerard, her eldest daughter, a pious and noble lady, as distinguished by her virtues as her name, her talents, and mind; then there were her three children, Cyrus, Maurice, and Félicie; then Madame Henry de l'Aigle and her lovely little Marie, an angel stolen from heaven; Madame de Caumont, fair, candid, and affectionate, with her little Bertrand; finally, there were MM. de l'Aigle and de Caumont, M. de Celles, and Marshal Gerard.

Madame de Valence lived in and for each of their loved lives; her eyes, closed with the kisses of her children, opened in the morning to the merry voices of her grandchildren; while for all, her stores of bonbons, toys, advice, and cheerful conversation, were inexhaustible.

It was scarcely day until noon in Madame de Valence's chamber, and I had generally taken a lesson in singing, practised at my piano, and read, before going to breakfast at her bedside. My days I spent very solitary, joining the family circle in the evening. I played a good

deal, to the pleasure of Marshal Gerard, who was fond of music; and I was rewarded in seeing him smile, grow animated, and almost join me with his voice.

It was a noble glory, that of the good Marshal, who had written with his sword his patent of nobility, had become great enough in himself to serve for ancestry to his children, and carelessly leaving to history the task of making him admired, undertook himself alone to make himself beloved by his family, and to return their affection by the most amiable indulgence and love.

Marshal Gerard took a quiet walk every evening, dressed in a very modest incognito, and on meeting a moustached old servant of the empire, would enter into conversation with him respecting the Emperor, his glorious victories, and sublime defeats; he would interrogate the old warriors respecting their position, and if they were ill-used or neglected, would see their wrongs redressed. One evening he returned later than usual, and with a gaiety too lively not to be expansive.

The Marshal had met on the Place Beauvau an old pensioner of the Imperial Guard, living

on his souvenirs in despite of his wounds, idolizing the past, despising the present, and passing for a victim when he might have passed for a hero. They fell into conversation; and having come to a wine-shop, the serjeant offered to share a bottle with his companion, who refused.

"That's coming it rather strong!" cried the old veteran. "That means, that an epaulette kicks against drinking with a wooden leg! *Crecoquin!* why Lucifer himself could hardly match you for pride; and though the cowl does not make the monk, you don't look much better than a sub-lieuteuant. To the right about-face! quick, march! Toss a glass we will, to the memory of the 'Little Corporal.'"

"It is impossible, my old comrade."

"What! you are afraid of a scratched face if you go home in your cups,—ch?"

"No, my wife is very indulgent, and no shrew. Come to breakfast with us to-morrow."

"There's my hand on it; and we will drink the Emperor's health, with three times three, without fearing the rascally police or the spies."

They parted; and the next morning a capital breakfast renewed between the two friends of the over-night, an acquaintanceship which petri-

fied the old serjeant, when he found himself the guest of a Marshal of France, who joined him, however, in the toasts drunk to the memory of the Emperor and all his glories. An increase of pension made the poor veteran happy; and for the future, he had two healths to drink instead of one; and to bless his Marshal as he had blessed his Emperor.

Towards midnight, the little drawing-room became a warm solitude; I took Madame de Valence her last cup of tea, and seated myself at the foot of her stove. At first we conversed, and then at my entreaty she evoked her souvenirs: her discourse resembled the flight of a butterfly over all the flowers of her past life, which she intermingled with the gayest and most charming anecdotes, sage reflections, and wit, such as there once was, but such as exists no longer. She told solemn stories of that part which leaves gravestones in our churchyards and eternal void in our hearts. She had been robbed by death of an eldest daughter, whom she passionately loved, a lovely little granddaughter, her mother, her husband, and nearly every friend with whom she had commenced life.

When I sought to interrupt these sadder recollections, she would say, "My child, God ever places resignation near to grief; the thought which causes me to weep, is also the thought which consoles me; my country is no longer in this world, and death which separates us in time, reunites us in eternity."

Frequently Cyrus G——, on leaving the theatre or his friends, would come to finish his evening with us; and his grandmother, whose favourite he was, would, on these occasions, display all the resources of her lively mind for his gratification, which gave us lovely and laughing hours nearly until the morning. Cyrus was about my own age, with little, if any more experience than myself; he was clever and accomplished, with the kindest of hearts, and was as much absorbed in the pleasures of real life, as I was in the ideal life of my dreams. We had continually long and violent discussions, without prejudice to a true and solid friendship; the renewal of that childish affection which had united us from our infancy, till about our third or fourth year. I became the confidant of my *vieil aîné's* pleasures and youthful follies; while he ridiculed my fantastic airs, and what

he called my stilted notions; and he was never prouder than when he made me blush at the account of one of his mad pranks. Sometimes he applied to me for prettily-turned phrases for his love-letters; and showed me rings, lockets, and locks of hair of all shades, which I am free to confess sometimes disturbed my rest.

While we chattered, Madame de Valence, who read all the while very attentively, in order not to become a party to our conferences, often bit her lip to avoid laughing at our sallies; and when we were alone, would say to me, "Do not believe a word of what Cyrus tells you; he endows himself with imaginary vices to surprise you, and to give himself a position in the world of your children's children."

I have long lost all clue to the paths of Cyrus; I do not know now whether he is a diplomatist, a lion, a sportsman, or a dandy; only, wherever or whatever he may be, sure I am that he is a man of wit and a man of honour.

CHAPTER XVII.

I FOUND Madame de Montbreton in Paris. Her tender amity for me was undiminished, and my admiration of her knew no abatement; I occasionally saw her, and our interviews seemed to me to be too rare and too brief. She presented me to her mother and sister, who lived in the Rue d'Angoulême, so near that of Berry, that Mlle. de Nicolaï and I met at first occasionally, then more frequently, and, at last, at almost all hours of every day. My family disapproved of this intimacy, on account of Mlle. de Nicolaï's reputation: she had been represented to them as a young person, who in her actions, disregarded the laws of society, and who asserted a greater freedom and independence than belongs even to married women. They dreaded her influence over me; and all Madame de Nicolaï's entreaties, joined

to those of her daughter, were requisite to reconcile them to my friendship with the latter.

Marie de Nicolaï had in truth an independence of manners, little in harmony with her position as an unmarried girl. Fancying that she had experienced those sentiments of uneasiness from which I often suffered, and that, more courageous than myself, she had shaken them off, bent on securing her happiness, not according to the ideas of the world, but after her own heart, I felt myself attached towards her by a close sympathy. Alas! I mistook emptiness for depth, love of this world's pleasures for love of the pleasures of the soul; I mistook impressions for sentiments; I had taken sensations for convictions!

Marie exercised the most absolute sway over all who approached her, and her will became the will of the three individuals who ought to have been her protectors. M. de Nicolaï, who stood for nothing in his family, was in the world the honoured honorary member of various agricultural societies and committees, and of all rural associations against fire, and devastation by hail and lightning. He was a man esteeming himself fortunate to be reckoned one among the number

of respectable nobodies who constitute the honour and hope of their department: he knew when and how to hold his tongue, kept a good table, and was blessed with one of those excellent digestions that require, after each meal, several hours of quiet meditation, and hence often confer a reputation for deep thinking. Madame de Nicolaï, who in her youth had been gay and giddy, had also then been pretty, coquettish, agreeable, and attractive; but all that had passed away. She repeated, smiling, indelicacies, at the bare thought of which a modest woman blushes; found a name for all which have none in the mouth of a woman; and, in short, had grown wrinkled in years that brought no respect, and the contemplation of which made me fear to grow old. Madame de Nicolaï, who rather disliked Madame de Montbreton, adored Marie—that is to say, that she realized all her dreams, all her fantasies, and gave her almost boundless liberty. The spoiled child had apartments to herself, an attendant to follow her in the morning, a governess to accompany her in the afternoon, and her mother to introduce her to society. It was in the saloons, more especially, that Marie's independence laid

itself most open to notice, and consequent censure. Scarcely had she entered than, left to herself, she was surrounded by young men, while her mother, lost in a distant apartment, in which her love of play retained her, there remained until ill-luck, recalling to mind her duty and her daughter, took her back to her side, to enjoy a sound and sometimes snoring sleep.

The third nonentity which revolved about the star of Marie, was a Mlle. Delvaux, one of those respectable articles who take up little room, make very little noise, and understand the difficult art of opening and closing their eyes at exactly the proper time and place—an accomplishment that the great spring of necessity, self-interest, alone can teach. Mlle. Delvaux had invested her life in an annuity secured upon the follies and vices of her pupil; and, with Marie's heedlessness, the price of her stock rose and fell;—she speculated on the young girl's secrets, and already reckoned with certainty on speculating still more profitably on those of the young wife.

The dancing season over, the return of spring brought Lent, religious duties, violets, leisure, ennui, and the reign of intimate friends. Mlle.

de Nicolaï, in weariness, promoted me from the dignity of her plaything to that of her confidante; next I became her inseparable; and after some time I became a habit to her heart, while she became an affection to mine. She went very late to bed, and always rose with the sun; very frequently she was in my apartment to await or provoke my awaking before my old attendant Jeanne had entered to undraw my curtains. On these occasions she would seek in my drawers and letters the secrets she accused me of withholding from her; and having convinced herself that I had none, that not one of my dreams had been withered by reality, she imparted to me, with an air of superiority, all the passions she had inspired, and enumerated those whom the dangerous sight of her charms had made her victims. She possessed volumes of sonnets, madrigals, and ballads, composed in her honour; pyramidal piles of dried flowers, and other less perishable love-tokens. In our drives in the Champs Elysées, Marie used to delight in initiating me into all the little mysteries of her conquests.

"You see that tall young gentleman passing in his phaeton?" said she, one day; "it is Count

Ernest de T——. I dare not salute him, his wife is so horribly jealous. At the last ball given by the English ambassador, he never quitted my side all the evening; and while we danced a cotillon, whispered, as he pressed my hand, that he loved me, and was miserable. Look before you, there is M. de M——, the brother of Madame de N——; his father and sister are almost as anxious that I should marry him as he is himself: but I cannot make my mind up to the match. He is a young courtier of the new school; and I have no idea of adding one to the number of grocers', ironmongers', and perfumers' wives who now grace the saloons of the Tuileries."

"I admit, my dear Marie, that Louis Philippe cannot pretend to the honour of receiving you."

"Oh! I did not mean to vex you—malice apart. Ah! there is Ernest de G——; he appears to be bowing to you: do you know him? Poor young man! thrice he has pretended to the honour of my hand, and thrice has he been formally refused. Would you advise me now to marry M. H——? The name makes me hesitate; he has no title, not even the little particle 'De,' which is deplorable.

But look at that young gentleman on horseback; it is the handsome young Antonin de N——; he would suit me well enough, if all the females of his family were not blue-stockings and wits."

"Yet, I have been told that Mlle. Sabine de N—— possesses a mind as amiable as her Madonna head and bust are beautiful."

"You were never more mistaken in your life: of all the young ladies in the Fauxbourg, she is the most deceitful and disagreeable. Ah! there is M. de M——. Yesterday he robbed me of my bouquet; but as he is almost a cousin, it is of little consequence. With him is M. de B——, a coxcomb and a gambler, with whom my sister bandies wit, morality, and philosophy two or three hours a-day. There's ——"

"Have done, Marie! I am sure that gentleman is a stranger to you."

"I am not so sure: but, hush! be cautious of Mlle. Delvaux. I have many things to tell you to-morrow morning, if, preferring me to your idleness, you will come and take a cup of chocolate with me in my room."

"Is it a secret, a real secret, you are about to confide to me? Answer me that question."

"I pledge you my word, a secret of the utmost importance, one that makes me at once very happy and very miserable."

"I thank you, dearest Marie, for your promise to share it with me. Where there is confidence there is love; and I only wish I had a secret to tell you in return, that I might prove to you my affection is worthy your reliance in me."

Between young girls the confidence of a secret is as important, as it is solemn for her who receives that confidence. It is an initiation to the mysteries of the soul and to the mysteries of devotion. It is, in some degree, an entrance into the paradise of her dreams; a little conspiracy against the absolute power of her family, which would retain its monopoly over her thoughts without relinquishing its monopoly of lectures. In short, it is something sacred, which makes the heart beat high; it is something forbidden, which causes it to tremble.

I was this time most punctual to the rendezvous. Mademoiselle Delvaux had been got rid of, the bolts were drawn, we were alone, and none could overhear us. Marie recounted to me, in a whisper, that, one day at the beginning

of winter, having gone on foot with her maid to make some purchases, she had been obliged to enter an omnibus to seek shelter from the rain. A glove of the most orthodox yellow tint, having been tendered to facilitate her ascent, she raised her eyes, charged with thanks, to that amiable glove, when she saw that it belonged to a young man of unexceptionable form and person, who had the manners of a gentleman and the air of a nobleman.

The Rue St. Honoré is very long, and it was necessary to traverse it throughout in order to regain the Rue d'Angoulême, during which time both parties examined each other, and enabled each other to divine that the result was perfectly satisfactory. Marie, in negligently playing with her handkerchief, permitted her pretty name, embroidered there at length, and surmounted with a countess's coronet, proud and coquettish, to be seen. The stranger, on receiving some villanous large sous in change from a new and brilliant piece of silver, disdainfully desired the conductor to release him from that disagreeable burden, and to scatter them among some beggars. At last, when Marie desired to descend, he descended first, again

offered her his hand, then, having respectfully saluted her, remained immovable in the midst of the rain and the mud, to protect her with his eyes, until the moment when the great door of her *hôtel* was closed between her and him.

Marie thought all day and all night on the meeting of the morning. Next day an irresistible impulse guided her steps towards the Rue St. Honoré; but *he* was not there, and she found that her memory was entirely filled with the image which chance had left in her heart.

Every Sunday, Mademoiselle de Nicolaï attended service at the little church of St. Philippe with her governess. One day, when the crowd was thronging to hear a charity sermon, by the Abbé Duguerry, all the places were found to be occupied, and these ladies vainly sought for a seat, when a grave and slightly accentuated voice offered them chairs, and caused Marie to start. It was he! The seats were accepted with thanks, and the young gentleman went to lean against one of the neighbouring pillars.

During the whole time of the sermon, the ardent gaze of the unknown was fixed on Marie. She felt its weight upon her eyelids; she wished

to avoid it; it shamed her; yet if it was averted, she was pained; and despite her will, her eye sought its return.

From that day forth they frequently met, at the Champs Elysées, at the Tuileries, and at St. Philippe. Without speaking, they told each other all. They had their days of confidence and happiness; and their days of sadness, full of jealousy, rancour, and vexation. If he came late to the rendezvous which had been guessed the evening before, without having been indicated, Marie avoided his looks, laughed, talked, and returned with an affectation of amiability the salutations which were addressed to her by the young persons of her acquaintance. Then if he became sad and jealous, or better still, indifferent, she employed a thousand little artifices to console and bring him back. She spoke loudly to Mademoiselle Delvaux what she desired he might hear, let fall a flower from her *bouquet*, and smiled her permission for him to pick it up and wear it at his breast.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I COULD have listened still when Marie ceased to speak. Struck with the romance of that history, greatly flattered at its being confided to me, and glad to find in real life one of those romances which seldom have existence except in the imagination of poets, I overwhelmed my dear little heroine with questions, wishing to know all, even more than she knew herself. I was grieved that I had not more minutely examined the unknown. I looked at Marie and found her much more pretty, since I knew that she was so beloved. In short, my heart beat more strongly than it had ever beaten before, and I felt a new and strange emotion. Marie laughed at my enthusiasm, but she was proud of the effect which her confidence had produced. She confessed to me with entire confidence, that she loved him; that the days were insupportably

long when his presence came not to shorten them. She told me that she believed him rich, having often met him in the park on beautiful horses; that she also believed him noble, a foreigner, and a man of the world; for so his manners, elegance, and distinction, bespoke him.

"Ah, well," said I to Marie, "you will deem me silly, but I have one regret—that the denouement is so simple. I should prefer your hero to have been very poor or very humble, in order that you might have had some sacrifices to make for him, some obstacles to brave."

"I thank you for your wish! But seriously, do you believe that I should be able to marry him? I have thought of it sometimes, but he is a foreigner, not intending perhaps to remain in France. Wherefore else does he not seek an introduction to my mother's house?"

"Is it probable he would do so without your sanction? And then, are you certain that he knows any of your friends, to introduce him?"

"You are right; that is the difficulty! But I wish you to make his acquaintance. I wish to make him understand that you are my friend and confidant. I believe we might meet him at the Musée—will you go with me?"

I consented. We wrote a line to Madame de Valence, to obtain her sanction to our passing that day together; and on entering the Louvre, Marie pointed out to me her unknown. Certainly, imagination could not have invented a hero more accomplished. He was tall, slim, and buoyant. His features were expressive of melancholy, like those of the reapers in the picture of Robert; and in his style, his attitude, and his motions, there was a singular impress of distinction and originality. I observed his salutation of Marie with his eyes; but on encountering my look which was strange to him, and which, perhaps, appeared over scrutinous and curious, he seemed uneasy, and withdrew to a short distance. I then affected to occupy myself exclusively with the pictures. I drew all the attention of Mlle. Delvaux, by consulting her on the merits and defects of the several painters. In short, I wearied myself so generously, and so long, that he became sensible I was a friend, and thanked me with a look full of amicable gratitude. From this moment I became a victim of friendship! I listened for hours together, and with profound attention, to the conversation of Mlle. Delvaux, who had the

dullest mind, or, to speak more accurately, a nullity the most burdensome which it was possible to meet with; but I was recompensed by those grateful eyes which rendered to me thanks, and initiated me into all their thoughts and pleasures.

That affection, which had already so strongly occupied the dreams of Marie when she was alone, grew more profound and more active through the contact of our two imaginations. We gave to the unknown all our thoughts. Marie wished to know his position, his fortune, to gain him an introduction to her mother, and to encourage him to demand her hand. I promised her to procure information as to him through my friend Cyrus G——. That to me was very easy, and I learned in a few days, that his name was Felix Clavé; that he was a Spaniard, and a literary man.

These details were a thunderstroke to Mlle. de Nicolaï. "My God!" she cried, "have you not observed, a few paces from St. Philippe, a large white house with a great black sign, on which are several immense yellow letters?"

"No, never."

"Well, that great sign and those large letters,

are without doubt the arms and blazon of our noble unknown. It is the *Institution Clavé.*"

"I confess, Marie, that this might wound your aristocratic ideas! But because he is the son, or perhaps only the nephew of the chief of an *Institution,* is he less worthy, less distinguished? Is his forehead less noble? Are his mind and his heart less visibly reflected in his eyes? If you are desirous only of making a marriage of interest, I understand your hesitation; but if your heart is his, how will you recover it?"

"My God! I love him still—I shall love him always; but only I could never become Madame Clavé, the wife of a man who gets his money by writing! My mother, my father, would never consent. What part shall I take?"

"Tell him that you will courageously sacrifice him to a prejudice, and will see him no more, in order that he may forget you as speedily as you will forget him!"

In spite of myself, this bitterness flowed from me in defence of M. Clavé. In becoming unfortunate, he had become more especially my friend; and that I might not wound Marie, I suddenly broke off the conversation.

Several days passed before we again saw each

other. One morning I received from her a short note, entreating me to go to her immediately, as she was ill, uneasy, and unhappy. Scarcely had I entered her chamber, when Marie told me, that having wounded, by her looks of indifference, the pride of M. Clavé, she had not seen him since; that she was in despair at the thought of being remembered by him only as a light and silly girl; and that she was desirous of making him understand that she sacrificed her own ideas to those of her family, her affection to her duty. That it was necessary, indispensable, that she should meet him again for the last time; and that she had determined on writing to him. I confess, that far from dissuading Marie from that imprudent resolution, I encouraged her. I confess even that I took upon myself, at her request, to write to him these two insignificant lines:—"For health, a promenade in the Champs-Elysées at two o'clock; for salvation, a prayer at St. Philippe." In short, they met; but the looks of M. Clavé were full of repentance and gratitude; those of Marie totally forgot that they came to speak of separation, and spoke only of pleasure and hope; and they never loved each other more than at

that moment, when they mutually wished no longer to love.

Next day Mlle. de Nicolaï received, by the post, some enchanting words from M. Clavé, who returned thanks for the kindness which had rendered him more resigned to the sadness and suffering of his poor life ; him who adored her on his knees, as the consolation of the afflicted, *the mystic rose of this earth*, &c. : that letter was brought while we were together in the drawing-room. In order not to awaken suspicion, and as it had no signature, Marie showed it to her mother, attributing the poetic expressions of that affecting acknowledgment, to some one of the ancient pensioners of the civil list, among whom she had been charged with the distribution of relief; and she afterwards was highly amused with the pride of M. de Nicolaï, who made her read to all their friends those adulations addressed for her kindness to his daughter. I confess that I could not laugh with Marie at the mistake which she had provoked. The words written from the heart of M. Clavé, seemed to me profaned by being shown to so many indifferent persons ; and to listen to undeserved compliments paid by a mother to my supposed

good works, would have oppressed my heart. It would have been a thousand times more impossible to receive those felicitations than the most bitter reproaches.

However, we had departed in a fearful manner, from the object of our little note, which was to bring about another last meeting, and another last explanation. Marie felt more pleased and flattered than ever with the love she had inspired. She did not wish to drive M. Clavé to despair, nor did she wish to encourage him; so she answered his letter by one which she desired to be severe, but which was affectionate; she requested him, as a favour, to write no more to her, and gave him my address, in order that his letters might reach the house of Madame de Valence without danger. My correspondence was not submitted to any examination, I was therefore able to render that service to Marie; and it was decided that I should continue to do so till my return to the country, when it would become extremely easy for them to conduct the correspondence for themselves.

An answer arrived from M. Clavé, followed by others. Marie, with great emotion, read

those sweet expressions of love to which she dared not listen. I was even moved myself on reading after her those kind words—the echo of a noble heart.

Sometimes Marie did not answer, but entreated me to do so for her; and then I received those fine phrases of friendship, which are quite as beautiful as the finest phrases of love. M. Clavé had accepted me for his confidant—his friend! I was the *second Marie*, to whom he dared to tell all the afflictions of his heart; who consoled, encouraged, and pointed out to him the glory which he might achieve—the glory which he might oppose to the nobility of the name of Nicolaï.

M. Clavé had informed us of the minute details of his position. He told us that he was born on the frontiers of Spain, had grown up among the mountains, having the large lakes for mirrors, little birds for confidants, and the beautiful stars for friends. Misfortunes had driven his family to Paris. His father, compelled to undertake the education of the children of the rich, in order that he might instruct his own poor children, and give them a position in the world, had piously left in his native land

the sword of his ancestors, and relinquished the name of *Villa-Nova* to take that of Clavé. With a noble heart which disdained wealth, and wished to acquire it merely to leave the right of contemning it, without being accused of envy, M. Felix Clavé suffered, and sought refuge in religion and poësy. He sent us a collection of his thoughts, and several verses addressed to Marie. If I may judge of those essays by my impressions of the past, I should say they were simple and affecting, and had the impress of a profound belief and a noble ambition.

CHAPTER XIX.

All that part of the life of Marie, who had taken possession of my thoughts, and added a friend to my heart in occupying my thoughts, had, however, increased the void which I found in and around me. How often, when Marshal Gerard passed his hand through the fine fair hair of his daughter, or regarded his sons with tender pride, was I obliged to run to my chamber to stifle the sighs which rose in my mind towards my poor father! How often, when I saw those happy children protected by the love of three generations, I suffered myself to murmur against the ways of Providence, to weep over my desertion, to count all my tombs, and the black marks which cross so many pages in the book of my life! I had, it is true, an excellent family, devoted friends, but those affections were only secondary; but I had not

the right of loving, and, above all, of being loved; and this was my great dream, my great desire!

For a long time I tried to fill my soul with my little well-beloved Antonine: orphans, we loved each other somewhat more than two sisters; but the difference of our characters, of our impressions, of our tastes, prevented that entire intimacy which is to affection what the dew of heaven is to flowers. Antonine had become a handsome and sweet young girl, who had a very good heart, a very calm head, and an imagination which, not seeking its joys in the clouds, threw a prism of happiness over all the realities of life. Without understanding the grief which sprung from my thoughts, my sister shared them when she saw me suffer; and, in the sorrow brought on by events, she wept when I struggled, and bowed her head in astonishment at my wrestling and my combats.

The school of Antonine joined the hotel of Madame de Valence. I passed with her all the hours of her recreation; and to preserve her from the little and great follies of the other boarders, her friends, I studied them, and amused myself in talking of them with her.

This school life is a miniature of the life of the world, and seems rather a school of prejudice, pretension, and slavery, than an academy of truth and virtue. Every thing, there, is sacrificed to appearances. These young plants must undergo, at some future time, the fate of those fine stuffs of brilliant colours, which dazzle our eyes, but are tarnished, effaced with the first breath of air, the first ray of the summer sun.

One cannot imagine the importance which is given in these schools to those ordinary beings called men, and who are neither much worse nor much better than ourselves. They make of them *serpents, demons, spirits of the abyss,* incessantly occupied in deceiving, in fascinating us. A young person ought never to look them in the face ; if she respects herself she ought to reply, *Yes, Sir ; No, Sir.* A syllable more might compromise them ; two syllables dishonour them. In short, I am sure that if one had made all these sermons to our mother Eve, in forbidding her the tree of knowledge, she would have eaten two apples, and we should be doubly unhappy for her fault.

The end of the spring brought a great revo-

lution in our family. My uncle, who wanted five minutes to decide on shutting a door, who put off his toilet to the next day to avoid choosing between a black and a white cravat; my uncle, who ran away when my grandfather spoke to him of marriage, who had so often hesitated, so often drawn back, defeated so often the finest plots against his liberty—my uncle married in eight days, and all alone! This feat, which seems unheard-of, was wrought by the power of a graceful and pretty young girl, Mlle. Blanche de Montaigu. It was a suitable marriage in respect of fortune. The betrothed was pretty, rather lively, but very good, having been brought up in the fear of God, and in the love of the husband whom he might give her; and to whom, in short, one could only reproach a too great abundance of ancestors, and a nobility of birth which was rather formidable.

It was a very sad and tiresome wedding. The pride of the bank, opposed to the pride of the aristocratic faubourg, threw, as it were, a mantle of ice over the minds and hearts of the two families. My uncle was quite perplexed with the Counts, Dukes, and Marquises who called themselves his cousins. Mlle. de

Montaigu added the patrician *De* to the names of her new relations, which had inherited no such ennobling particle. On both sides there was no respect shown, no love lost, but much fault found.

My good grandfather, who had through his life longed, dreamed, and prayed for a wife for his dear and only son; my grandfather, who had been perfectly agreeable to all who surrounded him, was quite disagreeable to his young daughter-in-law. He received her like an absolute monarch, jealous of his prerogative; forgot, in order to contradict her, that he had never had his own opinion with his children; in short, was prouder of his low birth than she was of her ancestors.

Unfortunately, custom required that the new married couple should start alone after the marriage ceremony; and my new aunt, instead of meeting, and overcoming by her affection, the pettishness of an old man, strove against it, and employed to remove it means which excited it the more. One day the mean white curtains were exchanged for pretty silk ones, in order to delight my grandfather, who could not endure them, from their perpetually reminding

him of the banishment of his old favourites of dimity. Another time, a piece of furniture which he loved *broken* was mended, or a favourite peasant girl had been treated with haughty kindness; in fact, our dear quiet Villers-Hellon was torn in pieces by civil war; there was a high party and a low party; my grandfather's servants pulled caps with those of my aunt Blanche, who wished to usurp their old privileges. They were obliged at last to send for my aunt Martens to restore peace to this little kingdom: but time, even more powerful than her presence, was also required to bring back calm and oblivion, and to destroy both the unjust prejudices of my grandfather and the exaggerated pretensions of his daughter-in-law. It was necessary that Madame Collard should cause Mlle. Montaigu to be forgotten, and that the noble stranger should learn how to love and to be beloved.

CHAPTER XX.

Two whole months had passed, during which my heart throbbed for the loves of others, during which I read every morning, on awakening, the tenderest sentences, to which I served as a faithful and discreet echo; and every day, being more satisfied with playing the part of *friend*, I found my mission poetical enough not to be envious of the dignity of *idol*. In this world, where there is much talking but little dreaming, it will be difficult to understand a silent love, and still more difficult to understand a silent friendship. Nevertheless, I think I was a true and devoted *friend* to M. Clavé. I at first loved him for the sake of Marie, then for the noble, original, and lofty sentiments which dropped from him in his letters. I understood them all, and partook of some; and if he sent all his love to Marie, all his thoughts, all his sorrows, were for me. I

was often more delighted with my letters than Marie was with hers. I read them long; I talked to them; but Marie read hers blushing, seeing little in them except the hour and place of rendezvous.

They sometimes met in the Champs-Elysées, more frequently at the eight o'clock mass, or during a walk which Marie used to take to the house of an old nurse who lived somewhere in the environs of the Faubourg du Roule. Finding that I was of no use at the morning meetings, where there was nothing to guard against but the eyes of a chambermaid, which could easily be closed, I would not give up to them my indolence and my studies; but two or three times a-week, I got leave from Madame de Valence to go for a walk with Marie and her governess.

Already the trees were covered with leaves, and the leaves were covered with dust. Everybody rushed to the country; and Marie obtained a few days delay only, in the name of a magnicent fête given at Tivoli for the benefit of some poor dependants of the Civil List. M. Clavé was to be there; and, after much entreaty, I was allowed to go there also, under the protection of Madame de Nicolaï.

This thought given to exile, misfortune, and charity, was translated in magnificent gardens by young and pretty women, who lamented and laughed, chattered and danced, and seemed to be the flowers of this new earthly paradise of beneficence. Many old and ugly dowagers were metamorphosed into poppies, peonies, and marigolds. There were Madame Lehon as a heliotrope, Madame Ch. Laffitte as a cabbage-rose, Madame de Fitz-James as a corn-cockle, Madame de Montaigu as a sensitive plant, &c. &c. Marie was a wild poppy amid a garland of daisies, her companions. There were very few violets, very few heartsease; it was no longer the season for lilies, but there were some flirting little *love-me's*, and some adorable *forget-me-nots*. After the sun had set, a thousand other suns arose radiant with beauty; the flowers took wings to become butterflies, and the ball commenced.

This was the moment at which it had been settled with M. Clavé that we might see each other, come together, and converse freely. The tent prepared for the ball, although very large, was not capable of containing the crowd which flocked into it. Fifteen or twenty little quadrilles were lost amidst groups of lookers-on.

The waltz went on, and the waltzers disappeared among the human waves, which caused around them a solitude more profound than that of a desert. M. Clavé advanced towards us without difficulty, and we were able to dance with him several times without observation. The first time that I danced with our friend I trembled so much that I could not speak.

"My good angel," said he, sweetly to me, "speak to me of her, that I may hear her name from your sweet lips. Oh! what have I done to deserve that she should fix her eyes on me, and that you should be my *friend?*"

"I loved Marie, you loved her also—that is the charm."

However, not having time enough to talk of the past, we thought only of the future. M. Clavé asked me to remain as his protectress with Marie. He said that he had expressed to her all the fervour of his love; that he had declared to her that, though unworthy of her until now, he had the ambitious pretension of raising himself to her, and not the weakness to desire to lower her to himself. He said, too, that he asked for three years' grace, that he

might offer his sword to Christina, that he might fight until renown or until death; that Marie, without promising anything, had allowed him to hope, and to await her answer.

"Speak to her of me," said he again, "if she gives her heart to me for the future, it is to you that I confide my treasure; guard it well, my dear Mariquita. It is the name of our mountain maidens, let me bestow it on you, let me mingle your sweet influence in the past, as I entwine it in my hopes."

During a quadrille that M. Clavé danced with Mlle. Nicolaï, a very elegant, and rather free young man, came to talk to Marie, paid her a thousand compliments, and made for her amusement a thousand jests, to which she listened smiling, and with enough of the levity of a coquette. I was alarmed at the gloomy jealousy which instantly appeared in the features of M. Clavé. The rest of the evening he was sad, silent, almost in despair. I could neither cheer him nor calm him. At length, in order to obtain my object, just as we were leaving, I persuaded Marie to give him a flower from her bouquet.

"You are too good for him," said she, "jea-

lous men are unbearable; I am forming his character for him; he will suffer somewhat, but he will only love me the more."

Marie set out the next morning for Busagny at ten o'clock. I went to shut myself up with her for an hour before her departure. The ball of the evening before was the only subject of our conversation. I told her how much I had been touched by the sentiments of our friend, and asked her if she loved him enough to wait three years.

"What nonsense," said she; "I would rather marry him without a sou, than wait three years weeping for my absent lover, like the pale maidens of our German ballads."

"So then, Marie, you are going to forget him?"

"No! be comforted; matches are made in heaven. Cannot he enter into diplomacy, reassume his name of Villa-Nova, rise rapidly in that honourable career? Is not that possible? But I am becoming infected with the mania which makes you always live in the morrow. Every day has its pleasures and its pains. I have promised to write to him, perhaps—if he writes to you, send me his letters."

I tried to ascertain, indirectly, from Marie, when and how she would see M. Clavé at Busagny. She was so profoundly and markedly reserved on this point, that I said that her silence did not arise from oblivion, but from wilfulness. She remained silent, and I became so; which, however, did not prevent us from shedding tears when we kissed and parted.

CHAPTER XXI.

After the departure of Marie, I found myself quite isolated. I was forced to think and live for myself; and I had entirely forgotten myself since the time when I found all the sentiments and passions which were personal buried, and I may almost say, rusted under those which I gave to my dear neighbours. The hours when the post arrived were the only ones, sweet and peopled as the past. Marie wrote to me endless letters. M. Clavé shared with me his sorrows and his disappointments; and I answered them both in the same tone, and translated the thoughts of one to the other. I sent to them words which would be most balmy to their bosoms; and above all, I spoke not of myself, in order more constantly to speak of them.

After the fête meeting at Tivoli, they had

quarrelled: he was jealous, she was angry at his jealousy; he fell sick, she pardoned him; he became worse; she was uneasy. At length he recovered, and wrote word to me that he intended to go to Busagny to see her, perhaps to speak to her; that his existence depended on the following day, which was to unite them. I shared his hopes; I filled my whole soul with them. Alas! that next day was destined to be a dreadful one to me! A letter had arrived from Villers-Hellon, stating that my grandfather was dying! It was my aunt Garat who came to tell me these dreadful news; and we set out together for Villers-Hellon, without hoping again to see our dear parent.

What hours were those! The postilions made the carriage fly along, yet we were in despair at their slowness; we counted the minutes. Alas! death flies so swiftly! It rained the sky was dark, and seemed to weigh us down. We had brought only little Gabrielle with us, who clung about her mother's neck when we started; she saw us weep; she embraced us; she closed our eyes with her tiny fingers to stop our tears, now sobbed like us, and then prayed God to preserve her dear grandfather's health.

At some leagues distance from Villers-Hellon our grief became so great, that we could shed no more tears. The cries of the birds of prey of the forest froze us with superstitious fear; we would have given years for one encouraging word; and when we attempted to call for this word, our voices expired on our lips, for the reality might be dreadful, and doubt was life yet. At length we arrived—a door opened, and a voice called out, "He is safe!" We fell into each other's arms, weeping now for joy as we had before wept for grief, and unable, from weakness, to leave the carriage in which we had suffered so much.

For a long time I thought only of our dear restored one. I had been so much struck by the idea of this last separation, this last mourning, that I could not leave him without pain. I slept at night on his couch, holding his hands clasped in mine, and supporting my head on them so as not to quit them during sleep. If he could not sleep, I spoke to him of his old friends whom I had found again at the house of Madame de Valence; I paused a thousand times to embrace him, to gaze upon him; and he, guessing my thoughts, pressed me to his

bosom, saying, "Poor child, you have suffered much! But weep no more; smile in those aged eyes which delight in thy joy. Be calmed; I have taken a new lease of life; and I shall some day sing over the cradle of your first-born the songs I sang over your own."

"Dear grandpapa, will you not love my little Jacques more than all your other little children?"

"That I promise you; but will you have the courage to give him my odious name? None of my children have done so yet, and yet it would have rejoiced me; it seems to me that my memory would remain more vividly among you."

"Oh, I assure my dear grandfather, that he will be very proud of bearing your name; and if my little cherub that is to be is not called Jacques, it shall be called Jacqueline. You shall bless it for me. I will pray to God to make it good, like you; and as you have been the joy of my infancy, it shall be the joy of my old age."

For this my grandfather thanked me with a smile; he was delighted; and long after he

spoke of the future, of a loving husband for me, and a fine little grandson for him. As he recovered his health, he went out more, and no longer lived so much for me alone, so that I could again think of the absent.

CHAPTER XXII.

On learning my distresses, M. Clavé sent me a few words full of compassion; after that he wrote to me no more. Marie also had partaken of my fears; but, far from replying to the questions that I had addressed to her concerning *our friend*, she spoke to me little about him; after that she ceased altogether to speak of him, and suddenly wrote to beg of me to return her letters, which might compromise and ruin her. Although a little astonished at this demand, I was going to return them, when a second letter, more urgent than the first, came reiterating the prayer. In expressing certain doubts of my discretion and prudence, Marie told me that she had been compelled to confide in her governess, whose advice and participation had become indispensable to her; and that Mlle. Delvaux had only accepted the part of confidant

on condition that Marie withdrew her letters and her confidence from me.

The silence and forgetfulness of M. Clavé were now explained to me. Without doubt they had exacted it of him. So long as they found my friendship of service to them they availed themselves of it, but when the occasion for it ceased, they rejected it; and I suffered and was humiliated at the part which they had given me.

In reply to Marie, I stated, that I would not trust her letters by the post, but that, as I intended to spend a week in Paris towards the end of the month, I would return them to Mlle. Delvaux, whom she could easily send for them. My letter was cold, sad as my feelings, and all the fine and tender sentiments which occurred to me in replying to her could not make me forget.

This double and romantic friendship was so intimately mixed up with all my thoughts and actions, that I was a long time before I could estrange myself from it. I often took up Marie's two letters, and I needed the evidence of my eyes to credit them. In the morning of life, it seems to us that we cannot sufficiently devote ourselves to those we love; we

wish to make them feel that they are dependant upon us, and to convince them that they cannot live without us. We make a future of their future, and we confide in earthly friendship, as we believe in the existence of a God in heaven.

It is in vain that they tell you the affection of man is fickle; it never occurs to one to apply to oneself general truths: all that happens to you, all which surrounds you, you conceive is an exception, and you do not govern yourself by the experience of the world, but by the experience of the heart. It is so painful to awake from one's illusions, that in our progress through life we often fall back upon the past, no more with the same confidence, but with the hope of retrieving those bright days of friendship and abnegation, with the hope of delaying that sorrowful time when one doubts oneself in doubting others; when one cannot find a single hope to cling to; when, having unsuspectingly confided in all, we begin to fancy all deceivers.

Marie herself came to Paris to receive her letters. When we met our hands were clasped in silence; and after some time she hesitatingly told me that I was unjust, that I mistook her

prudence for distrust; that she was unhappy; that as she had confided in Mlle. Delvaux, she felt is a duty to be guided by her alone.

"You are aware," said I, "that I never wished to guide you. It is with difficulty that I can guide myself; and I should feel greatly obliged to any kind friend who would show me the right way. But let us be frank, my heart is too heavy for jesting; whence comes this dreadful panic about my indiscretion? Have you forgotten that I am compromised for you as much as you are for him? What has happened to him? Has he shown himself less honourable? Have you commanded him to exclude me from his thoughts? Speak, I entreat you, this shall be the last time; and henceforth I will be as indifferent and heedless as you can wish me to be."

Marie's embarrassment increased; she assured me she had not seen M. Clavé since the ball at Tivoli; that she was not aware what had become of him, nor had she written to him, and entreated me not to attempt to write to him again; then she swore that she loved me as much and as well as ever, and that in reclaiming her letters she only obeyed Mlle. Delvaux, who

considered they affected her future prospects as well as her reputation.

"Good God!" added Marie, "are you quite certain that you have them all? For my part, I have taken the most scrupulous care of yours. I will return them to you if you wish; but seek well for all mine, and all that belong to him. I know the number of them; I could even particularize them all to you."

"Indeed!" cried I, with vexation; "Mlle. Delvaux has so profoundly impressed you with her character of meanness and suspicion, that I can no longer recognize my innocent, good, and whimsical Marie. I believe I have all your letters—all those that breathe even a word of your love, *so virtuously forgotten in one day;* they shall all be returned to you; as for mine, do what you like with them. I never will suppress my thoughts and sentiments; but as they were written for you only, keep them faithfully, and preserve them from Mlle. Delvaux. Among the letters which M. Clavé has addressed to me, I will give you all those which speak too warmly of the first Marie. With regard to the others, which only express to me his noble and confiding friendship, I will keep them with

affectionate remembrance. Believe me, it is much more easy to learn to love than it is to forget a sincere affection."

The arrival of my aunt Garat interrupted our conversation. Marie was compelled to depart without her precious little packet of letters, which she longed for so earnestly; and it was arranged that Mlle. Delvaux should fetch them early on the next day, before we set off for Villers-Hellon, where we were soon to be re-united with Antonine, all covered with medals and laurels, blessed with six weeks' holidays, which she was very impatient to spend in the country.

Impressed with the importance of her mission Mlle. Delvaux arrived early in the morning; requested to see me alone; and I was compelled to closet myself with her in order to listen to a long harangue on the dangers of my thoughtlessness, and on the candour of Marie, who had confessed to her her follies, and had chosen her for her friend. According to Mlle. Delvaux, my conduct appeared to her much more unpardonable than that of Mlle. Nicolaï. I would have withdrawn the confidence of a pupil from her governess; encouraged a blameable stupidity; indeed, *I was alone to blame;* and that

it was only to save *my* future prospects, *my* honour, that she had consented to conceal all from Madame de Nicolaï, &c.

These cruel and hypocritical remarks wounded my feelings, and hurt me so much, that I determined to punish them. I appeared frightened, and replied to Mlle. Delvaux, that not having the happiness of possessing so wise and prudent an adviser as herself, I had resolved to confide all to my aunt Garat, who would find some means of extricating me; and that, therefore, I would permit her to act according to the dictates of her duty and conscience, and to communicate all that imprudent intrigue to the mother of her pupil. I added, that I did not withdraw my letters; and not well knowing where to find Marie's, I could not return them at that time.

Mlle. Delvaux's consternation made me smile, and quite revenged me. She entreated, she humbled herself to overcome my determination of confiding in my aunt, and tried every artifice to obtain the letters. But if I re-assured her a little on the first subject of her fears, annoyed and indignant as I was at the weakness of Marie and the craftiness of her new adviser, I insisted on their yielding the second point, and I left

for Villers-Hellon without returning the letters; however, Marie's constant entreaties, and an ample apology from Mlle. Delvaux, made me renounce my little cruelty, and I charitably returned them the required correspondence.

These letters, although sufficiently impassioned and extravagant to induce a desire for their being burnt, were not sufficiently so, that they should wish to regain them by entreaties, threats, and unworthy suspicions. I was aware that many things were concealed from me; that they had not told me what had given them the formidable power to ruin and dishonour me; and if I forgave M. Clavé, who, being in love, had become a slave; and if I tried to pardon Marie, who, in being weak, had deceived me, I still retained a triple rancour towards Mlle. Delvaux; and, if she had been worth the trouble, I should have hated her.

I had committed an error, by concealing and partaking in a weak and imprudent action. I had already been punished by a thousand sad recollections, ungrateful and deceitful actions. I had now to atone for them in a more cruel manner. My aunt Garat's maid, astonished at Mlle. Delvaux's mysterious and designing

manner, and not knowing her, had listened at the door, heard her charitable appreciation of my character, and at last, being alarmed, had thought it her duty to inform my aunt, after I had left Paris for Villers-Hellon.

This new edition of Mlle. Delvaux's words, embellished and augmented as related by a lady's maid, made my aunt very indignant, and in the paroxysm of her rage and uneasiness, she wrote me a dreadful letter, and one equally terrible to my aunt De Martens. She, who was instructed to interrogate me, was at first very severe. She demanded a full confession; and as I would not betray Marie, insisted that it was my duty to reveal all to her, and that she would not listen to any imperfect explanations; she desired me to reflect for two hours in my chamber; after which I returned to the presence of my inquisitor, telling her all which could injure myself only, magnifying my own faults in order to diminish Marie's, still resolved not to betray my friend.

"My aunt, my good aunt!" replied I, "you are doubtless correct, but it will not render me more virtuous to betray my friendship, faith, and confidence. That which you call prudence,

I call perfidy. I cannot make up my mind to be wise according to the world, and wicked according to my own heart. My aunt, my dear aunt, you may scold me, punish me, but have pity on me, and do not wring from me a secret which is not mine to disclose."

My aunt not only let me remain silent, but she embraced me, and lectured me in a good and touching manner; she then promised to write and excuse me to her sister, to obtain forgiveness for me, which would console me for the severe comments in her morning's letter, which she wished me to discard from my memory.

"You know," she said to me, "that worthy Louise cannot subdue her first impressions. You know also, that when we are irritated, it occurs to us all to utter the most offensive and disagreeable things; at all events, you know your aunt soon forgets; courageously acknowledge your errors, and repent of them with all your heart. So, burn this letter, which made you weep for eight days, and which you did not deserve to receive.

In spite of these words I kept that letter which had caused me so much grief. I wished

to oppose it to any fresh suspicions of Marie; I wished her to know how I could love my friends, and suffer, to keep their secrets. Lord! Lord! in recalling these recollections, I am struck with the grandeur of thy designs, and I humble myself before thy Providence, so severe but so just in thy awful dispensations! This letter, which my pride had converted into a palm of martyrdom, with which I would glorify myself before my friend, was to make me blush and bow my head, and serve as a basis for the terrible accusation brought against me.

This, my first fault, was to my life what the avalanches are to the Swiss valleys; originally formed of a small portion of earth, they increase in size, whirling through the snow, they destroy flowers, bushes, up-root trees, rocks, forests, precipitate themselves into the plain, and become one vast tomb, beneath which are buried grandfather, mother, and child. Jesus Christ, crucified to efface the sins of man, has diffused over the world a great tenet of expiation; and we, poor creatures, must pay with grief and death, the great debt of our weaknesses, our rebellions, and our sins.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This year the autumn was gay and brilliant at Villers-Hellon. In addition to our party of young girls, were added our kind and good little aunt Blanche, who was loved by my grandfather a little, and had already become greatly endeared to us. Her sister, the Countess de Bongard, who viewed every person and every thing smilingly; M. de Bongard, amiable, sprightly, and clever at the piano; and to complete the whole, Edmond and Marie de Bongard, romping children, good and sprightly, who made an admirable noise, were full of gaiety, and served well for a *vis-a-vis* in a country dance.

It is a delightful period that of holidays. Fernand de Montesquiou, Antonine, Edmond, would willingly have compressed a whole year's amusement into the space of a month; all their

imaginations were tortured to devise a new pleasure for each day. The baptism of the young bells, which were about to change the broken tones of our old set of bells into clear and sonorous notes, became a great occasion of festivities and parties. My grandfather and my aunt Garat, my aunt De Martens and M. Elmore, my uncle Maurice and I, were deputed to name them; and after the priest had blessed and christened these great echoes of the religious world, and which resound to heaven the murmured prayers of our hearts, we had a ball, confectionary, and a delightfully gay evening.

I had too often need to exile my souvenirs, far from myself, and from those whom I had loved, that I might not be obliged to substitute to my favourite hours of solitude and reverie a continual activity of mind and body; I studied hard, rode much on horseback, spent all my evenings either in dancing or in music; in short, I lived in a state of excitement, which left no time for thought. My aunt Garat had so affectionately pardoned me, that after having endured her displeasure, too violent to be just, without remorse, I felt quite guilty when I

received her caresses and indulgence, and unhesitatingly submitted when she expressed a desire that I should cease all correspondence with Mlle. de Nicolaï.

No longer to be permitted to write; no longer to be permitted to reflect, was very sad! They sometimes discovered that the gaiety I assumed was fictitious; and my grandfather, who understood all my feelings, tried every means to divert my attention from unavailing regrets. One day he prevailed on my uncle Maurice to take me a long excursion on which I had long wished to venture; our desire was to visit Bourneville, a splendid estate belonging to the Duke de Noailles; to see the sun set from the feudal castle of La Ferté-Milon; and to return by moonlight through the lofty groves which are so beautiful in that part of Villers Coterets.

The concurrence of a great many things was essential to the practicability of my project; the permission to run the risk of fatiguing myself rather more than usual, a fine day, without too much sun; and a fine moonlight night. I had achieved all this; the horses were saddled, I had only been kept waiting one hour for my uncle,

and all that remained for him to do was, to put on his cravat, and give about twenty orders; when, alas! who should arrive but one of his neighbouring friends, who had come to spend the day with him. My good grandfather, who had anticipated pleasure from my pleasure, was as much annoyed as myself at this apparition. Witnessing my vexation and impatience, he prevented the sermon which was already on my aunt's lips in order to moderate me, by advancing to meet the Count de C——, and telling him that our horses were saddled, and that after breakfast we would escort him home on our road to Bourneville. This said, to avoid any impossibilities which a maturer deliberation might discover in our project, thus reviewed, altered, and inconveniently encumbered by a young man of five-and-twenty years of age, my good grandfather took care to leave the unwelcome visitor scarcely time to swallow a cup of tea, made us mount hastily on horseback, and wished us a pleasant journey.

When I was out of all danger of a counter-order, and when my uncle and his friend were riding by my side, I more attentively scrutinised M. C——, of whom I had seen very

little, but of whom I had heard much. He was described as a regular "kill-'em and eat-'em" of young girls; he was, they said, a very bad fellow indeed, whose conduct was as immoral as his words and sentiments. He had deserted a young person who was to have become his wife, and whom he had ruined. He devoted himself to such orgies at O——, that his mother could not enter his house; and then—and then—they finished by speaking in whispers; and the ears which were not under the power of a husband were obliged to close themselves, or were sent away.

This reprobate creature was of short stature, but of good figure; with a countenance full of expression, frankness, and noble intelligence. He chatted in a very friendly way with my uncle, and took no notice of me. This want of gallantry, which appeared natural enough during the first half hour, appeared very annoying to me at the end of an hour; and in order to amuse myself, or perhaps to divert the attention of the others, I lashed my horse into a full gallop, and was off like a dart. When I stopped, my uncle was at a great distance, M. C—— close to me.

"Mon Dieu! Mademoiselle! Were you run away with?" he said to me, earnestly.

"Yes, carried off by a desire of independence, but not by my horse."

"What! does the word independence find a place in the dictionary of a woman of the world?"

"No, certainly not; but it is a word engraven on all our young hearts, and is one for which I have a particular esteem."

My uncle just then overtook us, in a very bad humour, and began a long harangue on my fantastic freak. "Pray, dear uncle, be good," I said; "for it is still more tiresome to be scolded than to be forgotten."

The gentlemen began to laugh at my betraying my little feminine *ruse*, and we trotted gaily on, all three of us. After two hours' delighful ride, we left the forest and entered a charming valley, surmounted by a castle with gothic towers, the cheerful, happy, and chivalric air of which made me express an immoderate desire of visiting it.

"That is O——, where I shall be most happy to receive you," said M. C——. "Maurice, I shall quarrel with you, if you do not yield to your niece's desire."

"I am much obliged to you, Sir. You have a pretty eyry there, quite picturesque and feudal; but I will more closely inspect it some other time;—to-day it would delay us, and our moments are precious."

My uncle and M. C—— remained a little behind together, and after a very long confabulation, a servant darted off like an arrow for O——; and my uncle told me that we could pass through the gardens and court on horseback, and that I might pluck a bunch of grapes without dismounting. All was as he wished. This delightful abode appeared more beautiful and remarkable viewed near than from a distance. They told me that there was no one there; however, I saw at a window in the first story a hand undrawing a curtain, and which appeared to me too delicate for that of a cook. This action, and my observance of it, did not escape my companions, and they precipitately gave a signal for departure.

After galloping for a long time, M. C—— asked my permission to accompany us in the remainder of our ride.

"Ask my uncle," I replied. "I know he would be but too proud of your company; but

I am doubtful of its propriety, and whether we shall not incur thunders of censure for so doing."

"Would you, Mademoiselle, be uneasy at incurring these censures and calumnies ?"

"No; but very impatient of sermons."

"You are not then free."

"Free! I am like all the young girls of this beautiful France, brought up under a despotic government; I must make my character subservient to the will of the great autocrat, who will one day elevate me to the dignity of a married woman."

My uncle was some distance before us, humming a favourite air from the opera of *Marie;* and my conversation with M. C—— continued for some time, now gay, then serious, always sarcastic and stinging, and very free in its manner of treating things

"Already!" cried M. C——, when it was time to separate. "Already!" replied an echo in my breast.

A month had elapsed after this ride, when my aunt De Martens told me that she was occupied with a treaty of marriage for me; that I had made a conquest of M. C——, and that he

wished me to marry one of his friends, M. Felix de V——."

I do not know why the beginning of this sentence made me tremble and blush, neither can I say why its termination threw me into a desperate fit of ill-humour.

"It is no doubt, by way of contrast, that M. C—— becomes a surety for his friend. He wishes, no doubt, that we may see the disparity between them, and that that disparity may become my surest guarantee."

"What admirable severity! and yet you told me, on your return from your ride, that you found him both amiable and clever."

"That is true; but I now think him very impertinent in the part which he is about to enact."

"You may continue to think so, but still behave graciously to him. This is a suitable marriage for you; your grandfather wishes it; and I know Felix is wholly guided by his advice."

A grand hunt was proposed in order to secure an interview, but the weather being unfavourable, rendered it impossible to quit the saloon and the fireside. My aunts were quite amiable, and placed favourably in relief all the talents,

wit, and virtues I possessed, or rather *those I ought to have had.*

My grandfather could not avoid showing, by some phrases and inuendos, that he was in the secret, and very favourably disposed to its success. In short, M. de V——, as much embarrassed and as much *ennuyé* as myself, seemed to have entrusted the task of pleasing to M. C——, who took too much trouble to make me appreciate his friend.

All day the *corvée* was complete. After dinner they made me play a piece on the piano, of a professional difficulty, sing a grand aria, and M. C—— came and sat near to me, and asked me for Weber's waltz. While I played to him this mournful and last composition of the great German musician, an inconceivable sadness took possession of him whom I had formerly seen so sprightly and witty; he leaned his brow on his hands, and appeared absorbed in painful recollections.

"You are in pain," said I; then involuntarily, under the influence of bitter feelings, I added, "is that also by proxy, and for M. de V——."

He looked at me with an air of astonishment, and replied, with vivacity, "Does this marriage

displease you? Be frank, I beg, and pardon me for being so selfish in wishing to retain you in our forest, for our pleasure and that of Felix."

"No doubt M. de V—— would appear amiable to me, if he would try to appear so in his own person."

"You punish him, then, for having chosen me as his interpreter?"

"No; but I had believed, Sir, that you thought a little less like the rest of the world, and that, after having spoken to me some days ago of your disgust for the sad and unnatural traffic which is made of marriage, you would have abstained from making yourself its apostle, and me the subject of your experiment."

"Do you never intend to marry?"

"I do not wish an end without a beginning. I wish to be loved seriously before I give away all my life, all my heart, all my will."

"Pardon! a thousand pardons! I knew that you were amiable and witty, but I feared that you might not have common sense."

"And now do you doubt it?"

"Now, I appreciate that which pleased me, in you."

I forgave M. C—— his wrongs, and my

grievances; imposing on him as a penance, an entire sincerity, and the obligation of giving himself a great deal more trouble to hinder the marriage, if it did not please me, than he had taken to ensure it success without my consent.

He told me that M. de V—— was of a faithful and generous disposition, but violent and despotic; that he wished to marry, that he might possess a wife, a fortune, and a more agreeable position; that my heart was not considered in these arrangements; and that for many years past, M. de V—— had entertained for a woman of the world a passion of which he was but imperfectly cured.

"Perhaps," added M. C——, "I am wrong to confess all this to you. To make amends for an imprudence, I betray Felix. Your happiness is become so precious to me, that perhaps I am become unjust and partial. Speak of it to M. Elmore; believe him rather than me; afterwards your will shall be done."

M. C—— asked me again *how* I had been so good as not to partake of all the prejudices which assailed him in the world; and if it was in ignorance of his *crimes*, or through goodness of heart that I had been so sincerely amiable

with him during our long promenade with my uncle.

I owned that I was not ignorant of any of the accusations which pursued him; and that far from being frightened by them, like others, he inspired me with a confidence as great as would the young man most perfect and estimable in the eyes of the world.

"Oh! thank you, thank you," he said to me; "interest and pleasure draw around me many young men, but I have no friend. They think me very foolish, very bad, very extravagant; I am, above all, very unfortunate; and my life counts more afflictions than faults!"

"Marie, give up the piano to your aunt," said my grandfather, approaching us; "she will have the goodness to play while you dance; and you know that enlivens my old thoughts."

"You are going to dance?" whispered M. C——.

"I must. A young lady who wants to marry, must make the most of all her little advantages. It is your fault."

"And you will dance with me?"

"No; M. de V—— advances towards me; I read in the eyes of my grandfather that he

must be accepted. Dance with one of my cousins."

M. de V—— was perfectly silent, and his system of amiability by proxy was so strictly followed, that one might have said that he had enjoined his friend to fix his eyes upon me, and to make me blush under his looks.

At the moment of departure, M. C—— entreated me to talk with M. Elmore, and to dictate to him my orders through that friendly interpreter.

The next day, when I spoke of this marriage to M. Elmore, I found him as disinclined to persuade me to it, as he had been impatient the evening before to see it accomplished. He told me, as had M. C——, that M. de V—— had but little fortune, a character too despotic to agree with mine, and an actual passion which was no secret to any of his friends; finally, he induced me to refuse; and it was agreed on between us, that he should take upon himself, with M. C——, to cause the project to fail, without my having to brave the will of my grandfather, and the imperious advice of my aunts.

On the occasion of the departure from Villers-

Hellon, my grandfather wished to keep me to himself alone; that was a happy month, during which I was beloved and spoiled, and put quite out of reach of all lectures, governesses, and vexation. I had found in my aunt Blanche a friend. She almost obtained from me some of my love for my grandfather. He also was less unjust, and was no longer averse to her, when I preached to him a litany of praises in honour of his daughter-in-law; it short, we were all as nearly happy as we could be.

In the month of December, my aunt received a visit from her father the Comte de Montaigu. His friends called him an original; his enemies —I have, no doubt, forgotten what But what does it matter? I am one of his friends, and I only found in him a *lion* of sixty; perfectly good and kind. M. de Montaigu had set up his household gods at the Opera, had obtained letters of naturalization on the soil of the Royal Academy of Music, and had not missed a single performance for forty years.

My aunt's two brothers accompanied their father. The elder, who was much talked of, was a perfection of talents and virtues; the second, who was not talked of at all, was a wild

noble young man, who had turned soldier to gain his epaulettes with the edge of his good sword, who conquered a horse with boldness, but blushed before a woman, even before a girl.

A few days after this visit, my uncle Maurice had the glory of becoming a father. For a whole hour he and I stayed with my aunt, and afterwards I endeavoured to console him amid the cries of the poor invalid, which reached even the drawing-room to which we had been banished. These cries were so sad, so alarming, that sometimes through horror I forgot to comfort my uncle; and understood why the divine Diana, having been obliged to act as midwife to her mother, was so greatly alarmed that she gained, from the circumstance, courage to remain an old maid during eternity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I RETURNED to Paris late in the season of balls and pleasures; and my aunt Garat, always kind, and wishing to initiate me a little to this world of dissipation, presented me to such of her friends as received company. My aunt's circle consisted of the most elegant women of the Chaussée d'Antin, of bankers, of money brokers, and of men stupid enough, but in the fashion. Certes, gold was not a chimera in this part of the world; being the aim or the means, the beginning or the end of all things; tongues vaunted it, brows were adorned by it, and many women created from it wit, grace, and beauty. The pride of gold is more intolerable than the pride of ancestry; to cover oneself in the shadow of our forefathers, in order to appear great, virtuous, and powerful, is a false pride doubtless; but to cover oneself with gold, and to fill

up with crowns all the gaps and nullities of one's person, is not to have even an idea of that which makes of man a great and noble creature.

Among these gilded divinities were some exceptions, such as Madame de Vatry, full of grace, wit, and talents; Madame Wells, who possessed a goodness graceful as her beauty; and Madame la Comtesse Lehon, who was an adorable woman, and a woman much adored.

I saw no more of Marie de Nicolaï; I obtained even rarely permission to pass a day with Madame de Montbreton. Thus, after having so much loved, I was without a friend; but during three months I mixed so much in pleasure, that I did not suffer from this total void, and I lived without interchanging a thought that was not one of balls and society.

Two young persons interested themselves in my life; one was Mlle. G——, who was amiable, pretty, and spoke in raptures of the ball of yesterday and to-morrow; the other, Mlle. M——, with whom I talked of the future and of husbands; but husbands according to the world, husbands loved and desirable as forerunners of bridal clothes and presents, of independence and pleasure. Pauline was a

most amiable girl, with the character of a spoiled child, and a mind which she seldom employed. Having lost her mother at an early age, she had become the idol of her father, M. M——, who possessed a fine fortune, a handsome figure, really good qualities, and who assumed all the vices of fashion.

After some tedious balls, at which, not knowing any body, I had the honour of dancing at the request of my aunt or of the mistress of the house, and with partners disagreeable enough to be polite, I was introduced at some delightful parties, where I amused myself with all the sprightliness and intensity of my character.

At the request of Madame Wells, who was to give a masked ball in Lent, my aunt undertook to organize a quadrille, and we had the presumption to dance a *pas du ballet* from Gustavus. Our lessons in the Styrian graces procured us a whole month's amusement; Mlle. Gautier being of the quadrille, all our rehearsals took place in her mamma's drawing-rooms, which were still impregnated with the remembrance of former grand balls, and always filled with her Bordelais talented, amiable, and indefatigable dancers. There was a peculiarity

in Madame Gautier's soirées, which consisted partly in the grace with which she presided, and much in the freedom, cordiality, and gaiety which were displayed by all the youth who resorted thither.

Madame Alexis Dupont and M. Mazillier had undertaken to make us as graceful Styrians as possible. The first lessons were discouraging, intolerable; then we improved a little; then became tolerably graceful, and at last we gained the entire approbation of our illustrious tutors, and when the grand day arrived, or rather the brilliant night, decked in our gay costumes, we obtained splendid success, applause, and compliments. My partner was a young English colonel, Mr. Martin, the principal dancer in our troop He was amiable, but chiefly admired for his coolness, and the despair he manifested when I neglected to study my part seriously and properly. Mlle. Gautier had a young Bordelais, M. Sarget, for a partner, who danced very ungracefully, but very willingly.

In giving an account of all my balls, I cannot omit to mention the excellent waltzers who enlivened them, MM. Durieux, de Carcy

Courpon, de Lamarthonie, who possessed figure, mind, manners, the waltz of a gentleman, &c.

With Lent all these amusements ceased; and to these days, which were enlivened by the recollection of past fêtes and the anticipation of future ones, succeeded days of solitude and idleness. I was barely able to find my aunt disengaged for ten minutes during the day, for the visits commenced at noon, and she passed her evenings at the theatre, or with her intimate friends. I endeavoured to resume my studies and occupations, which had been pleasant and easy to me during past years; I only half effected it. I tried to recall my souvenirs to my aid; I was not more successful. Some vague figures glided smoothly through the memory of my imagination, but they danced and whirled in my brain; none of their words resounded in my soul without an eternal accompaniment; they were friends *à grand orchestre*. The joys of this world, which attach themselves neither to the heart nor the mind, leave behind them a void, discouragement, and an intolerable discontent of oneself and others.

I have already said my days were sorrowful; I will add that they were unchequered. A

walk for health, at two o'clock in the day, under the protection of an old and cross English governess; an evening during which my cousin and I were yawning, without the courage to speak, lest we should increase our *ennui;* and, lastly, some advice which our Argus imparted to us in the form of sermons.

What a wretched existence! And while we were thus living in Paris, at Villers-Hellon trees were budding, violets sprang up lowly and fragrant among the moss and meadow grass, the birds were warbling, and the sylph-like butterflies re-appeared to flutter over the sweet flowers of peach and almond trees! All nature was gay and happy!

My days passed, then, in regrets for this life of the spring, in regrets for my grandfather, my old nurses, and for my beautiful Eyram. It was less than a regret, and more than a recollection of M. C——, a friend of an hour, of whom I could not think without blushing, and of whom I dared not speak without speaking a little ill of him, which I did not think.

The amusements of the winter had tired and lulled my imagination; it revived again in solitude and silence more exacting than ever before.

It said to my heart, "What friends hast thou?" —it no longer had any. It demanded of my reason what was its object? and my mind was as silent as my heart. Then the powerful despot created dreams of happiness, of love, in spite of truth, of prudence, and sometimes even of my will. One only little graceful, charming creature smiled on my isolation, and made me forget it. This was Gabrielle, the second child of my aunt Garat, a little girl and little angel of three years, the joy and pride of its mother.

I shared with a majestic Newfoundland dog all the predilections of Gabrielle. We often, all three of us, passed hours together in playing at hide-and-seek, racing, and romping, till at length dog and child would fall asleep on the carpet. The little fair head of Gabrielle would repose on a cushion at my feet, and its two little delicate and rosy arms would, like a collar white and rosy, embrace the neck of the good Betzi; and I watched them in admiration; and if perchance I took up a book, and the child in waking did not meet my eyes, she would say to me with her sweet voice—

"Do not read, but love us while we sleep."

Among other favourite games of this dear

child, was that of making me go to sleep; then she would close my eyes with her little fingers, nurse my head upon her knees, and if she thought I really slept, would cunningly untie the riband of my hair, seize my head, cruelly torture me, and afterwards repay my loss of stolen hairs with such sweet kisses, that I would have willingly become bald to deserve them.

One of my greatest pleasures was to be allowed to take Gabrielle with me in my morning walk. I decorated her then more elegantly than usual; I myself curled her fair and playful ringlets; I displayed a proud and motherly gravity; and leaving the nurse and governess at some distance behind, I led her by the hand through the long passages of the Tuileries; I called her my child, and it seemed to me that everybody envied me my beautiful angel, and considered me as doubly woman, and doubly worthy of respect.

One day that I had my gracious *decoration* in my hand, Gabrielle, pulling my sleeve gently, said—

"Listen to that gentleman; he says that I am prettier than a kitten."

I indeed saw at some distance from us a

young man, who in following us cast an eye of admiration on my little treasure, smiled at her, and also in return received sweet and expressive smiles. This intrigue, childishly coquetish, lasted the whole of our walk.

Sometime after that, I met at the Louvre Gabrielle's admirer; he was passing simultaneously with us through the great gallery, and, as at the first time, followed us to the door of the Bank. The next day—the following days, brought the same meeting; if we entered a shop, he waited for us outside; if we turned, he did so likewise, with indefatigable patience; his eyes were never off me; if I smiled, he smiled also; if I were sad, he would read my looks with anxiety. My eyes, which had at first sought for my unknown with curiosity, were soon accustomed to find him, and no longer avoided a silent greeting or the sorrowful adieu which he addressed to me as the heavy door of our hotel closed. It was an amusement of mine which my *ennui* received without reflection, and with which my vanity was very well satisfied.

The deportment, the figure, the style of dress of the monsieur who attended our pro-

menade, bespoke infallibly the gentleman. Tall, thin, pale enough for one to suppose that he had a secret pain, or at least a slight touch of consumption, having expressive eyes, varnished boots, and yellow gloves of the most becoming shade; he had been pronounced a very noble gentleman by our old English governess, who, far from making herself uneasy on account of these meetings, told me that the young ladies of her country thus began their courtship, and showed herself flattered in having a scholar who deserved the attentions of this noble gentleman.

CHAPTER XXV.

These little romantic meetings, the remembrance of which lightened my serious thoughts, not being a mystery, and being rendered somewhat ridiculous by the expressions of our imprudent governess, would have been very innocent and harmless, if at the same time there had not unhappily fallen into my hands a novel written from the heart; written with spirit and animation, which affected me deeply. In this interesting work, the hero Anatole follows every where the woman whom he loves; saves her life; shows her the most passionate affection; writes to her; causes himself to be loved by her without seeking to approach her, and without seeking to speak to her. After five or six hundred pages—after Anatole is adored not only by her whom he loves, but still more by the reader, we discover that he is deaf and dumb;

one weeps, one would weep for ever, if she did not marry him, if they were not perfectly happy—thanks to Abbé Sicard, who teaches the language of signs to the beautiful and noble friend of the hero.

How shall I dare to say that I was foolish enough to dream of a deaf and dumb man in my unknown admirer? that I wished him this misfortune; that I saw the symptoms of it on his countenance, in his sadness, in his eyes?

Not being able to comprehend the questioning solicitude of my gaze, he showed himself happy at meeting it so frequently; and after having followed us for two hours, he stopped two hours longer under the windows of my aunt's saloon.

One Sunday he came to prayers near us, in the chapel of Calvary at St. Roch; the following Sunday he was there also. On leaving, he offered the holy water to the old governess, then to me; and when my glove slightly touched his to receive from it the drop of holy water, I saw him raise his glove respectfully to his lips, and thank me with a look full of gratitude.

I was accustomed to take violets and roses frequently to my aunt; and for this little purchase I stopped frequently at a shop in the

Passage Vivienne. My *shadow* stopped there near me, and generally attached to his button-hole one of the flowers I had touched in selecting mine.

One day, when he had preceded us a few minutes at the shop of the pretty flower girl, she presented me with a bouquet of beautiful white roses.

"Oh! how beautiful they are!" exclaimed I; "I believe that you wish to ruin me."

"Oh!" replied she, with a smile; "give me for them what you please, but keep them. I wish you to give me hansel this morning; it will bring me good luck for the whole day."

Without waiting for my reply, she wrapped them up in tissue paper, and recommended me to carry them carefully, so as not injure the leaves, and to put their stems in water on arriving at home. I carried my bouquet with an inexpressible sentiment of vague expectation, which I dared not avow to myself, which I could not explain to myself; and which, however, made me blush when I met the beaming look of my unknown admirer fixed upon my bouquet.

Having entered my chamber, I immediately

broke the thread which confined the stems of the beautiful flowers. A small piece of paper fell upon the carpet—I picked it up, and read it hurriedly. It was a declaration; words of love which told me that I was beloved, passionately beloved, and for ever! . . . .

I thought that I dreamed! I squeezed the little note to assure myself of its reality. I looked at myself in the mirror to see if I was more handsome since I was beloved; in short, I was a little crazed; and notwithstanding my desire to enter advisedly on this grand phase of my life, I leaped with joy like a child, and I read again and again all the charming exaggerations which I had inspired. I confess that the wise thought never entered my head of confiding the secret of my little note to my aunt or my governess. I knew that I did wrong, but my imagination chased this salutary reflection, by shouting in its joy, loud enough to stun me, that I was twenty years of age, that I was an orphan, and my own mistress.

I passed the whole night without sleep, wishing to reflect seriously upon the conduct which I should adopt, but unable to find one reflection which had not been altered and falsified by this

rapid transition from depression to exaltation, from a yearning void to the dazzling reality of a first love-letter!

However, at the hour of our customary walk I pretended a violent headache, so that I might not give him an opportunity of reading in my eyes that I felt happy and flattered by the little, audacious, and impassioned note of the previous evening; but I could not suppress my curiosity from approaching the window, and his eyes encountered mine! I assumed a dignified and severe air; but one of his roses forgotten in my hand, destroyed its effect . . . The expression of triumph and success which the sight of this flower called to the countenance of my unknown wounded me, and I resolved to punish him for it. The whole of this and the next day I renounced not only my walk, but also my window, or at least I hid my head so well between the thick folds of the curtains, that if I saw him he could not see me.

The third day, having remained for a long time and very uselessly in my silken lurking-place, I approached the window:—he was not there; he did not come. I went out for my usual promenade; I had to wander up and down

the long avenues of the Tuileries alone, and depressed in spirits as of old . . . He had consigned me to the oblivion I had provoked by my conduct! I was melancholy, afflicted, unhappy, miserable, at this indifference: it seemed to me that I was doomed to remain alone upon the earth; that God had decreed all my life should be love, but that I should be condemned never to be loved again; abandoned to regret and utter hopelessness.

Directly that he ceased to love me I believed that I loved him; I searched my heart; I was terrified at the least symptoms of love that I discovered there; and when, eight days afterwards, not hoping for him more, I found him, sad, pale, and unhappy, looking towards my window, I was foolish enough to listen to the dumb prayer, which demanded of me an answer; to write to him that I had suffered from his forgetfulness, and that I had doubted of the affection that he had offered me.

His answer was full of passion and gratitude: he slipped it quietly into my hand after a long walk, taken, like those of the past, at ten paces from each other.

The beautiful month of May arrived: we

went sometimes to the service of the Virgin, with my aunt, *he* also went to join his prayers to mine! We daily met each other in the garden of the Tuileries. Twice the admirable music of Duprez made our hearts beat with the same emotions; little notes hidden in a flower or exchanged in the street prepared these rendezvous for our eyes. Sometimes also I opened the window, and sang to him those airs I could sing the best. The whole month passed thus . . . . then came the departure for Villers-Hellon.

It was impossible for me to receive letters there, and he was going to travel. His looks swore that he would love me for ever; mine promised never to forget him. I do not know whether he was very unhappy; but I was not very sad, for I had not felt much love for him except during those days when I thought that he had forgotten me, and that he loved me no more! . . . .

I had scarcely been two days at Villers-Hellon, when an unfortunate incident discovered this imprudent and ridiculous intrigue to my aunt Garat. Never, oh! never, shall I forget her indignation, the words with which she humiliated me! She would know all, and did not

give me time to answer her. On the appearance of the letter, she became more enraged than ever, and said "That I was lost, dishonoured; that I would be denied by family and friends; that this man would show my letters; that he would despise me after having bestowed on me the mere semblance of love; that he would blush to call me his wife, and would never marry a young girl so imprudent as to have written to a young man who was unknown to her family, and with whom she had never even exchanged one word! He wished to speculate upon possibilities;" she added, "he believes you to be a rich heiress, and now all your fortune would not suffice to purchase his silence!" . . . .

Was it possible! I was twenty-one years of age, and I had already lost all hope! all honour!

"My God! aunt," I exclaimed, sobbing; "save, for pity's sake, save me!" But she left my chamber without listening to me, and locked me in.

I was driven to desperation; my head felt as if it were on fire! Those words of scorn, of dishonour, distracted it. I told my good Lalo that I should lose my senses, that I wished to

die. My grandfather was gone out; she had in vain entreated my aunt to be kind to me; and the poor girl, not knowing any other way of quieting me, suggested the idea of my writing to this gentleman, who could not be so wicked as to injure a poor girl that had never done anything to wrong him. I accordingly wrote a letter, despairing, supplicating; and Lalo sent one of her nephews five leagues in order to put secretly into the post at Soissons.

I did not despair so much when my grandfather returned; I threw myself, all in tears, upon his neck! I could not speak. Lalo endeavoured to tell him the cause of all my grief.

"Come, come! weep no more," said he, embracing me, "your aunt had cause to scold you, but not to torture you thus. Be calm, my child; you are not dishonoured; you shall see happy days yet, and a husband. Come, smile on me, and let *me* read you a lecture upon the imprudence you have been guilty of in writing these foolish little notes. In the first place, I will tell you it is wrong; next, that it is stupid; and that, if your reputation is not endangered, your prudence and your disposition will be so exceedingly. I promise you that the consequences of

this folly will be easily averted; so, kiss me, and do not wet my cheeks with your tears any longer . . . Be calm, be calm. I am going to look for your aunt; I will arrange every thing . . . . You know how much I love you, my dear little criminal!"

In two hours, my aunt Garat, provided with my notes, was on her road to Paris; in two days she returned, and called together a little family council, before which it was requisite that I should appear. My aunt told me that she had seen *my hero;* that he was an apothecary, had an income of six hundred francs per annum, that his father was an apothecary and druggist, and would establish him in business. She told me that my hero offered me his heart and his hand; and that I should reign over his rhubarb and senna before the end of summer.

I was confounded; I dared not raise my eyes, I dared not speak, I dared not weep.

"This marriage is contrary to my wishes," added my aunt; "you might have remained among us, happy, honoured, beloved . . . . But let us speak of that no more . . . . love knows no obstacles; one is always happy with the heart of one's choice . . . ."

This was not all: my letters were then read in a loud and intelligible voice, and being thus read with lawyer-like coolness, they had an inexpressible air of ridicule and folly; then, after this torture, liberty was granted me that I might in solitude indulge in my own reflections; they were horribly sad, painful, and humiliating! M. de Pourceaugnac, le Malade Imaginaire, threatening phantoms, rose up around me. I would have married without hesitation a well-informed countryman, an honest working man; but to marry a druggist, and without love! it was enough to drive one to despair.

Fortunately my grandfather came to me secretly to shorten my agony. He assured me that this marriage was merely a fable to give me a lesson for my imprudence; that it had been easy enough to repair my folly, and that the *young hero,* when he understood that I was an orphan, and not an heiress, had very willingly renounced *his* eternal love.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My emotions were too sad and too deep for me to undergo without sinking under them. The very evening on which these painfully ridiculous scenes were acted, I remained for six hours without sensation. I had two attacks of fever, which made me shiver twice as if under the icy air of night, and I came to life with a nervous affection as painful as violent. The spasms caused me to pass all my nights without sleep, and produced in me a vague sadness, feverish, insurmountable during the crisis.

My aunt Garat became particularly kind to me; her words had never before been so soft, so affectionate. She avoided the remembrances of my last torments with a considerate feeling; she planned for me pleasures and amusements; she even frequently made me sleep in her own

chamber, to cheer my sad and tedious nights at the expense of her own rest.

To all these agitations succeeded the parties and enjoyments of the winter; to all the foolish dreams of my imagination succeeded calm, serious, and melancholy reveries. An affectionate word, a kiss from my aunt or my grandfather, caused me to experience a gentle emotion which brought tears into my eyes; sometimes music made me happy; at other times it affected me beyond expression. The colour fled from my cheeks; I was changed; they became uneasy about my health. However, I did not suffer much .... I had merely a weakness of body and of mind, which was as a half sleep, as a half existence. It required commands to make me leave my couch, to extract a word from me. I had not a smile but for my grandfather, and I did not feel that I lived except in the conciousness of loving him.

I passed nearly three months in this state, and during that time the most tender care, the most anxious attentions were lavished on me by my family, my friends, and by our good peasants. The finest fruits and the most beautiful flowers were reserved for me, and the

young village girls disputed with my nurse Lalo the right of participating in tending me by night.

M. le Comte Ch—— came to make his annual visit only. At the time I was still very ill; I passed my days reclining upon a couch, under the shade of the great lime trees, on the grass. He approached me, and seemed sadly shocked at the change; he informed himself of my sufferings with the most affectionate solicitude; he had arranged to stay with us but one hour, but he remained the entire day; was anxious, attentive, and on his departure, spoke of returning, and begged permission to send to make inquiries as to my health.

"This visit that you announce to us—are we to reckon it in place of the next year's?" said my grandfather, smiling.

"I no longer reckon," replied he, seriously, and turning towards me.

In short, not a fortnight elapsed without bringing back M. Ch—— to Villers-Hellon. He always came when we were alone; occupied himself particularly with me; sought for subjects of conversation which seemed particularly to interest me; brought me books, reviews, and

poems; at last he knew so well how to engage my attention, that he was permitted to remain by my couch or by my arm-chair, to preserve me from a ray of sun or from too keen an air, from a melancholy thought or from too painful an emotion.

When autumn brought back the holidays and the accompanying pleasures, when we had fêtes and numerous *reunions*, and my health was improved, our new friend came but seldom; he took to his accustomed habits of sadness, recklessness, and abstraction, increased by a remarkable desire to avoid me. I was grieved at this change in him, and anxious to know the cause.

"Have I involuntarily offended you?" I asked him one evening. "Is it necessary that I should be ill to be thought deserving of your attention?"

"But you have no longer any need of me. Are you not surrounded by friends?"

"That may be; but you were willing to amuse me when I was suffering; I wished to do the same for you when you appear to me unhappy. You refuse—we are quits; let us mention it no more."

"Oh! listen to me!" said he. "I esteem you with all my heart; your friendship, your confidence, your advice, will be invaluable. But I fear for the calumnies of the world, which I brave so willingly myself; I fear that my friendship, instead of honouring you, should expose you to idle and ridiculous remarks. My reputation is very bad; I fear——"

"Could you not somewhat change your mode of life?"

"Do you then know the story of my life?"

"Yes; I know you have friends who destroy you; speculations which ruin you; and principles, which, while every body else repeats them to himself in whispers, you declare aloud."

"What next?"

"What next! Is not that enough?"

"There is more than that, Mademoiselle; I have at home a wife who is not my wife, a woman who has abandoned her husband to follow me."

"Poor fallen creature, how I pity her!"

"Rather pity me! She is happy, and I am wretched!"

"That is to say, then, she is to be despised, and you are weak."

"Are you willing to convert me, to save me, to be a *friend* to me?"

"I will. I will be a very severe friend (*un ami très sévère et sans* e); and I will acquaint one of my aunts of it, that she may comprehend our design, and permit us to talk together sometimes."

"Thank you! thank you! but is this resolve sincere and sacred; is it to endure?"

"For ever," said I, extending my hand to him.

This conversation made a deep impression upon me. I had found M. Ch—— noble and confiding; I was sweetly proud to lead him back to the duties of life. So, in the morning, I spoke to my aunts thereupon.

They listened to me attentively, whispered together a little at first, then told me, that they permitted me at present a friendship, which, six months previously, they would have considered dangerous, and that they required of me entire confidence for M. Ch——; only not to conceal from them any actions or any words of M. Ch—— which related to myself.

From this period M. Ch—— visited us often. He chose those days on which we were alone, occupied himself exclusively with me, who soon became the confidant of all his troubles and all his affairs. He had engaged in immense speculations. He was surrounded by young men, who ruined him to enrich themselves, praised him to deceive him, played upon his vanity to destroy him.

It was often necessary to raise his courage, overthrown by their injustice and cruel deceptions; and it was more often necessary to combat his chimerical hopes and destroy his illusions. This man, whom society had discarded, whose every word was sceptical, all of whose visible actions violated established usage, who laughed at virtue and devotion, who scoffed at life and at death;—this man was noble, devoted, generous, concealed his merits, confided only to me;—this man, in fact, was happy and proud when I said to him, "I am content—'tis well."

In October, I saw for an hour or two Mlle. de Nicolaï, who came to pass two days with Madame de Montbreton. She did not mention a word respecting M. Clavé, but her second word to me was to request me to write to the

mistress of the post-office of Villers-Coterets, to send *me* a letter which she expected, and wished to conceal from her sister. It was impossible for me to comply with her request. However, far from being grieved at my refusal, she was, as formerly, friendly and communicative, and revealed to me her present passion. This year, it was at a ball that she had turned the head of a poor youth, who had managed to get an introduction to her mother, and afterwards an invitation to Busagny, where he had passed some days. Marie did not love him then, but carried away by the ardour of the love he expressed for her—carried away by the indolent and monotonous solitude of the country, she received some letters, and granted him some secret interviews in the park; and at length made him so far believe that the affection was mutual, that he threatened to exile himself for ever, or to blow out his brains, if she would not consent to be his bride. Mlle. de Nicolaï was at a loss to know how to preserve herself from this mortally passionate love, and seemed very repugnant to a marriage, which secured none of the conventional requisites of such a bargain.

M. de Léautaud possessed a small title, a revenue of some debts, no position, and character ditto. I confess that I occupied myself but little with this new intrigue. Marie had so easily cast off and forgotten M. Clavé, that I was well assured as to the termination of this second imprudence, and fully resolved to take no part in it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our last five days of the season were passed wearily among a knot of advocates and notaries, &c. &c. For many years past, my grandfather had neglected his affairs; his fine revenue, given up to neglect and disorder, was no longer sufficient for him; he had incurred debts, and it was indispensable to *check* them; it was very difficult to effect this desirable object. My aunts, who only spent a portion of the year at Villers-Hellon, had time to detect all the vices of his home department, and the errors of his administration, but not to commence any serious reform; my new little aunt could not occupy herself with it, having no influence with my grandfather, and my uncle wanted firmness and perseverance in the execution of his economical ideas.

After an awful reckoning up of debts; after a thousand projects more or less impossible, my

grandfather offered to put me at the head of his affairs, to let me have the management of his income, and, in one word, to make me the head mistress of his dear Villers-Hellon. My aunts were happy, and re-assured by this arrangement; and to obliterate Paris from the tablet of my mind, they exaggerated the service I should render them, wishing to flatter my self-love and my pride.

But I had no need of consolation. The possibility of being necessary to the happiness of my grandfather, of benefiting the condition of all my friends, the liberty and the independence which I now enjoyed, left me no room for regret. I had a lady's maid, an allowance for dress, and my grandfather presented me to all of his friends as his better-half.

On the first of November, which bestowed on me my full powers, all our old servants were assembled in the drawing-room; there, with tears of emotion and joy, they promised to obey me; to respect me as much as they had loved me; to assist me to remedy old abuses; they promised to give up to me their ancient independence, and not to murmur, for the love of the little girl whom as an infant they had danced in

their arms. Good and faithful servants! in one week all the habits of disorder and licence of these little insubordinate tyrants of the kitchen, the stables, and the garden, were subdued. There was no discontent—not a murmur. If I saw a slight cloud on the face of my nurse Mie, who, after having enjoyed a disorderly reign of thirty years, was astonished, to find her doings criticised by the little girl from whom she used to shut up her cakes and jellies, I embraced her, and her face brightened. If Durand our cook was too careless and independent, I appealed to his self-esteem, and managed him. In short, I had in succession reproof, praises, and encouragement for all, and thus prevented not only any bad acts, but also even signs of ill-temper.

My grandfather was amused at seeing me thus play the lady; and with perfect good humour yielded to all my wishes, my economy, and my tyranny. He had reserved a sufficient sum for his pleasure, or rather for the pleasure and the wants of others. Well, I perpetrated sundry affectionate little rogueries, in order to obtain the right of dispensing this for him according to my wishes. Each of us had our especial pensioners. The

young girls were his favourites, the good old people mine. He gave away fine gowns, I gave soup and wine; he made them dance, I filled their snuff-boxes; he diffused joy, I removed pain. In truth, my grandfather protected those whose birth he had witnessed, and I consoled those who had bent round my cradle.

When I was blessed for the benefits which I diffused for my grandfather, I wished earnestly for the time when it would be permitted me to merit for myself this affecting gratitude. And when sometimes I could console in my own name, and give something which belonged to me, I hoarded with delight the little treasure of benedictions which belonged to myself alone.

On learning that I was elevated to the dignity of mistress of the house, and that I should pass the winter at Villers-Hellon, M. Ch—— appeared greatly pleased. He could but rarely come to to see me, his affairs requiring his presence; but if he had griefs, if he had hopes to impart, he would find an hour to share them with me; or, if restrained too imperiously, he would send his favourite servant to learn the news, to talk to my good Ursula about my health, and he would send me books and flowers.

M. Ch—— had fixed the end of October 1838, for the opening of his rail-road. He intended to give a grand fête; and reserved for me the honour of being queen of the ball, of the fire-works, and of being the first carried on his first carriage.

"Then," said he, "I shall ask you for my conduct the advice you give me for my affairs. I shall become good, worthy to openly avow myself your *friend*, your *pupil*. Then—"

"Hold your tongue," I replied gently. "Think but of the innumerable difficulties which remain to conquer. Consecrate to them all your time, all your thoughts, and do not dream until you have touched the goal. We must habituate ourselves to the idea of misfortune in order to bear it nobly; on the contrary, happiness soon teaches itself; we want no reflection to accept it, but shed bitter tears to lose it.

Never were any of the graceful and amiable common-places of the world exchanged between me and M. Ch——. During his visits, which were rare, and always reserved for the evening, we were confiding friends; we were occupied much with ourselves, and very little with those who surrounded us; and my aunt Blanche, with

a perfect good nature, would take a book, and be as deaf and dumb as we could desire. If any stranger arrived, whose eyes and ears were open, I sat down to the piano, and played some very brilliant and very noisy variations, and managed thus completely to isolate our conversation. In these intimate exchanges of thought, we spoke of his business, his vexations, and mistakes. I was indignant with him, scolded him, and consoled him. He was happy when I let him dream aloud of his successes, but if I spoke for myself of a future more distant than the morrow, he would say—

"In mercy, think not of the future. Do not dispose of it; be every day the providence of your grandfather; be the joy and comfort of your friends . . . . then wait, I entreat you, ... wait!" I dared not translate these words to myself, nevertheless I dreamed of them for many hours; they helped me to forget that woman whom he loved, his rare visits, his singular character; they suffered my thoughts to wander in a vague infinity of hopes and fears. Those of my days which M. Ch—— came not across, were still calm and peaceful. I read and walked with my aunt Blanche; I had her little

Valentine to worship, at least an hour every day; and besides, my aunts wrote to me from Paris long and kind letters to cheer my solitude.

When any of the subjects in my little kingdom revolted, when any abuses called for wise and prudent laws, I went to pass a week with the Comtesse Dulauloy, a friend of my father's, who lived in a beautiful château on the banks of the Aisne. Madame Dulauloy had been so exceedingly beautiful at twenty, that she was still so at sixty. All in her and about her bore the stamp of elegant simplicity, order, and refinement; her gardens, her house, her dinners, and her servants, had a reputation for indisputable and undisputed perfection.

Madame Dulauloy, who was perfectly kind to me, initiated me to all the mysteries of her *model administration;* promised to draw up a code of laws for Villers-Hellon, and engaged to come to my assistance whenever I should be impeded or perplexed in carrying it into execution. This was not all; when she had improved my education, as mistress of the house, this dear friend of my father bestowed some thought on my pleasures. She quitted her solitude to escort me to the balls at Soissons; corrected and anticipated the fashions, in order

to compose for me a delightful toilette; and enjoyed my success with an indulgent kindness which will never be effaced from my memory. During the Carnival, in order to amuse and occupy my grandfather, I thought of giving some *soirées dansantes* to the inhabitants of the village. All the young men, all the girls, assembled in the dining-room on Sunday evening, where two violins played in unison pretty quadrilles; there were besides, cakes and other refreshments; and until midnight the gaiety and the pleasure of others delighted my grandfather, and he was quite happy when I danced, when I had made myself very handsome, and his peasants admired me.

On Shrove Tuesday, I wished to add to these pleasures, the surprise of a little masked ball, and our neighbours kindly lent themselves to my wishes, and accepted my invitations. My grandfather, with an admirable kindness, consented to go back to the time when he was an infidel of the Directory; my uncle Maurice was a noble Styrian; M. Elmore an unexceptionable Grand Turk; and M. Ch—— had caused to be made at Paris a splendid costume of the time of Louis XIII. We had a pantaloon, a Figaro;

in short, we excited the wonder and admiration of the guests of our village. At one o'clock in the morning the party ended with a good supper. Never was I at a more pleasant fête; I danced eight times with M. Ch——; he thought my Tyrolese dress charming, and praised it a thousand times this happy night.

In March, my aunt Blanche had the honour of presenting my grandfather with his first grandson. He had eight grand-daughters, and had been so long tired of the feminine monotony of all his generation, that I quite envied my aunt, who at last realized for him his wishes of thirty-five years—his hopes almost despairing. Contrary to all my expectations, my grandfather received this news but coldly.

"What!" cried I, "you are not happy, not proud of the boy that you have so ardently desired!"

"No, my child, death is very near, and I have no time to create in myself a new affection. My treasure is large enough, and I have no desire to increase it, that I may retain strength enough to die."

Perceiving that he had made me sad with his thoughts of sorrow and parting, he added—

" Do not afflict thyself at what I say; thy cares, thy tenderness will lengthen my life ten years, and for thy sake I will keep a place in my heart for *our* little Jacques."

This kind thought, which made me blush, but filled me with pride, was repaid with kisses. It seemed, that my dear grandfather had divined that I was jealous of the happiness which he did not owe to me.

The grand relations of the family of Montaigu were sent for, to give to the pretty little boy his name and his qualification of Christian; but as they could not quit Paris to baptize the little marmot, my uncle begged M. Ch—— to represent his father-in-law, and I had the honour of representing the godmother.

This was one of my bright days. In the morning I received a box of bonbons, with sashes, gloves, flowers, and ribbons. Every thing was white, every thing was perfumed; an affectionate care had presided over this present. Later in the day M. Ch—— arrived. I wished to thank him, but he seemed already so happy that I dared not express all my gratitude to him.

" Do you know the necessary forms for this ceremony?" said my aunt, laughing, to him.

"Not at all," replied the godfather.

Then, turning to me, he asked me to assist him, and to teach him *his prayers.* I sat down on a couch in the drawing room; he seated himself on a low chair just at my feet, took my large mass-book, and the lesson commenced. I said the prayers over to him, and he repeated them after me.

When we came to the salutation of the angel, he took a long time to learn it, a long time to repeat it; and as we finished he opened the book at the mass of marriage, and tore out the two leaves, as he said:

"You will not be able to read that again without me."

The firing of guns, vivats, and a great crowd accompanied us to the church; on entering it, leaning on his arm, I was much affected; an old woman exclaiming:

"Don't they look nice? They are just like a new married couple!"

Upon which he pressed my arm, and whispered:

"Marie, in a year!"

I had begged my aunt not to invite a parcel of tiresome people, but to let the peasants only

dance in honour of her son. So we were quite alone, *en famille*, with M. Elmore, who was reckoned too much as a friend to count for any body.

We danced in the dining-room, but it was cold, and the blazing wood fire in the large chimney of the saloon enticed us there between the dances. Twice M. Ch—— found himself there alone with me. The last time, I had rested one of my arms on the large chimney-piece while I was conversing with him; suddenly he seized my arm, crying out:

"Imprudent creature! you are burning! thus it is you die."

"A tomb at twenty with flowers, tears, and prayers! do you think that so fearful?"

"You would wish to die; you! and without having been beloved?"

"It is so difficult to be so, truly, in this world."

"You are so, Marie;—I love you. Yes, I love you with all the power of my soul."

He took my hand, carried it to his lips; he looked at me without speaking; and I was motionless, trembling—M. Elmore entered.

"I accept," I replied, in a low voice to his look.

"In a year?"

"Yes, in a year."

After this day nothing was changed but our hearts; he came not oftener, he stayed not longer. As before, we talked of his affairs, his troubles, his hopes, his deceptions. He only stopped sometimes to say "In a year!" He only pronounced my name in accents of affection, of devotion; he only pressed my hand on his coming, and kissed it with respect when we parted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the spring I went to pass a few days in Paris with my aunt Martens, who wished to learn the results of my "administration," and who wished also, before she set out for Baden, to be made the confidante of all our secrets, and give me her good counsel. I told my aunt of the noble and candid affection which M. Ch—— expressed for me. She was affected by my recital, and gave me her permission to love him almost as my betrothed. How happy did it make me! It would have been impossible for me to obey her if she had said, "Think of him no more!"

Since I had last seen my old friend Mlle. de Nicolaï, a great change had taken place in her existence. In January, she had become Viscountess de Léautaud, and the particulars of her marriage, which were given me by M. de

Montbreton, astonished me as much as they did the rest of her acquaintances.

He told me that M. de Léautaud had come one fine morning to pay a visit to M. de Nicolaï, that he remained with him all the day, then all the evening; and that on the following day it was officially announced, that in a fortnight he would be the happy husband of Mlle. de Nicolaï.

How! said one, Mlle. Nicolaï, so proud, so difficult to please, to refuse the most advantageous offers, and marry the little Léautaud. Well! that is an enigma.—What! said another, Mlle. de Nicolaï, who so much loves pleasure, dress, riches, to marry so many thousand francs of income, which are doubtless so many thousand francs of debt. Yes; it *is* a problem. At all events, she marries in mid-winter, that she may the more freely enter into society?—Not at all; M. de Léautaud is in deep mourning for his mother; M. de Léautaud cannot dance the whole season.—Then it is a love match, and she must be happy indeed?—Still further from the truth; she has the air of a victim, who marries incognito at seven in the morning; laughs no more—talks no more.—Incredible, surprising, wonderful! was the universal chorus.

A little note had apprised Marie of my arrival in Paris. She came to see me at my aunt's. I found her altered, serious, but more tender, and more friendly than ever. I then saw her wonderful husband. He was a young man, a little less desirable than many others, and that was all.

Two days before I left Villers-Hellon, I had received a letter from M. Clavé, which renewed our former acquaintance. He wrote to me from Algiers, to reclaim from me some little of the affectionate interest I had formerly lavished on him. He assured me that he had religiously preserved my remembrance in the depths of his heart; and asked me, with a bitter expression of irony, for news of Marie and her marriage. I showed to Madame Léautaud this letter, which I had brought with me. She appeared troubled, agitated, and entreated me not to answer it: "For," said she, "M. Clavé is not an African colonist, but a figurant at the Opera." She had seen him there, and his name was on the list; Mlle. Delvaux was also convinced of it. I pointed out to Madame de Léautaud that the letter bore the post-mark of Africa.

"That is to deceive you, and ruin me. But

I desire, I exact of you, that you will not answer it."

I promised her this very willingly. Pleasingly isolated in my remembrance of the past, and in my hopes of the morrow, I had scarcely time to bestow on the indifferent.

The time that I spent in Paris seemed to me an age, and I was very happy when I found myself once more at Villers-Hellon, where I might hope for—expect him.

The affairs of M. Ch—— became more involved, and the consummation of all our wishes appeared to be flying before obstacles almost invincible. He could not dispose of a few hours without losing valuable time, neglecting his occupations, and creating new delays: so that on meeting each other, we regretted the days of happiness which time was stealing from our bright futurity.

Seeing that he was unwell, very unhappy, almost in despair, I seldom allowed him to travel the three leagues that separated us; and we agreed to meet each other when I rode out on horseback in company with M. Elmore. Our place of meeting was one of those beautiful open spaces in the forest of Villers-Coteret, in

which its majestic avenues terminate; sombre arcades of green trees, under which the soul is entirely given up to its Creator, the heart to its friend. When I saw M. Ch—— as yet far off, I allowed the rein to fall on the neck of Eyram, leaned forward, gave a low cry of impatience, and the nimble courser, who seemed to understand me, darted through the air, and carried me swift as an arrow towards the dear expected one.

When we met, out of breath from the rapidity of our course, we could not speak, but we smiled; we looked an interchange of thought, and our hands pressed each other in token of welcome. After having thanked M. Elmore, who presently joined us, we chose little, wild, and rugged paths, in which it was impossible for three to ride abreast. Our worthy friend generally allowed us to precede him, and performed his part of guardian, near enough to see us, but without being able to hear what we said; I often turned towards him to give him a word, a look of thanks, to make him forget the minutes which we so willingly would have changed into hours.

M. Ch——, with whom Diana Vernon, my

pretty Scottish heroine, was also an especial favourite, pretended that he had found her likeness in me. He was proud to see me brave the dangers by his side; proud of seeing me brave the scandal of the world, that I might give him my advice, my encouragement, my affectionate attachment.

"Dear Diana Marie," he would often say to me, "you are above prejudices; you despise them, you trample on them, without difficulty. Oh! how I bless you for it, how I honour you for your courage above all women."

"You deceive yourself and flatter me, if you believe me indifferent to censure. I fear it, I suffer from it, but I do not yield to it except when it comes from my own heart. I would neither sacrifice to you my conscience, nor a single duty, but I could brave all the laws of the world to please you."

The affairs of M. Ch—— coming incessantly to usurp the chief place in all our conversations, he sought in vain to conceal the truth from me; I saw that he suffered, that he struggled, that he gave way before enemies, more and more elevated, excited, attracted, by the allurements of his fortune. I was not

alarmed at seeing him slightly ruined, but then I understood the value of riches, and I could have desired millions, that I might bestow them upon him.

After each of these brief interviews, we exchanged our word of consolation and strength: "In a year!" We exchanged adieus, a flower! Then I left him at a walk, and he stopped his horse, and followed me with his eyes until a turn of the road prevented our seeing each other any longer.

When M. Ch—— was obliged to go to Paris, he wrote to me by M. Elmore, and I answered him with a few words in the same way. Our letters were simple—serious as our affection. We were happy, without mystery and without fears.

This feeling, which had taken possession of my existence, did not absorb it, but filled it. Far from forgetting my duties in thinking of him, I fulfilled them more strictly, that I might render myself worthy of his love. From the time I began to love him, I prayed more frequently to God. I repeated my prayers, evening and morning, once in his name and once

in my own. I made him the partner of my good deeds, that he might partake in the blessings which they brought me: finally, when we were quite separate, I still lived entirely in him and for him.

My good grandfather did not much approve of M. Ch——. He did not understand love so deep, so serious, as his was; he feared the deranged state of his affairs; above all, he was jealous, on my account, of that woman whom he kept at the head of his household.

I did not participate in this feeling of jealousy. Once only had M. Ch—— spoken to me of this woman; he told me that he had made her, in case of a separation, exorbitant promises; that it would be difficult for him to realize them at the critical moment, but that, if I could not endure her presence at O——, he would remove her, and that the impossible would become possible to him, in order to prevent me a disagreeable reflection.

"Forgive me, if I am proud enough not to be jealous," I said to him, as I gave him my hand: "I will not accept a love such as that which has drawn you towards her: I pos-

sess those of your thoughts which are noble and generous; I have all your confidence, all your esteem, your whole soul.—What have I to envy her?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

The beautiful months of the flowers and the harvest thus flowed along, without producing in my heaven other clouds than those which obscured the sky of M. Ch——.

My aunts had gone to pass the summer at a watering-place; and, left alone with my aunt Blanche, I performed the honours of Villers-Hellon to my friends, who admired and congratulated me on the economy I had introduced. Every one had divined the very happy and very fixed idea of my soul; Madame de Montesquiou was alone disturbed at it; and she, while all around were smiling, prepared me for bitter tears.

At the end of August my grandfather was unable to leave his chamber, owing to a violent attack of rheumatism, which soon confined him to his bed; and in two days after congestion of the brain declared itself.

None of his daughters were near him. My uncle and aunt dared not prescribe any remedy, and eight hours elapsed before a doctor could be procured. What hours! With my eyes fixed upon the pendulum, I counted every second. Our dear sufferer was no longer able to speak; but he informed me by signs, that he recognised me; that he was no longer in pain, and I suppressed my emotion, in order to catch a smile from those eyes which were rivetted on me. At last, the doctor arrived; but, alas! he gave us no hope.

In those fearful moments, my noble grandfather was as calm and untroubled as his conscience. I was seated, by his desire, at the foot of the bed, so that he might see me; and when, from time to time, I went to give him some medicine, I kissed his grey hair, and bent my head under his hands to receive his blessing.

Towards midnight an expression of joy escaped from me, — he called me towards him: —

"My child!" he uttered in a low voice, "do not leave me; I am going to sleep—let me rest my head on you."

"God be praised! then you are better?"

"Yes; but let me sleep."

I made a sign to Lalo for her to inform my uncle of this happy change, and I sent for the doctor that he might assure us of his recovery. Then I knelt down upon the bed, placed his head on my knees, and bent over him with a feeling of adoration.

Suddenly, I felt his hand press mine; then that burning hand became cool, cold, freezing under my lips, which strove to warm it. I felt that terrible impression which I had experienced at the death of my mother: I shrieked! His soul was no longer with us.

I adored my grandfather. The tears which I had thrust back into my heart, to spare him their sight in his last moments — that hidden grief—that repressed anguish, now caused me a fearful nervous crisis. I remained motionless, speechless, thoughtless, until the day on which my aunt Garat, arriving in despair, restored to me the faculties of suffering and weeping, that I might suffer and weep with her. The tomb, which had just opened to rob me of my last support, had opened again two other tombs in my heart. I seemed to have lost in one day my father, my mother, my grandfather.

M. Ch—— came to weep over me, and over him; I remembered that he had need of my life, and I began again to live. My aunt Garat wished to remove me from Villers-Hellon, which to me had become the scene of many painful associations; but before my departure, I had decided on having a positive explanation with M. Ch——. It was on a Tuesday that, for the first time since our misfortune, I descended to the saloon to receive M. Ch——. Each article of furniture awakened in my mind some sad reminiscence. At last he arrived, more tender and affectionate than ever. And yet, in our conversation, he carefully avoided all allusion to the future, and gave me to understand that he had some recent sorrow weighing heavily on his mind. Whenever I spoke of my departure, he turned pale, trembled, and soon changed the subject of conversation: my situation was becoming insupportable. At length, he said:—

"I wish to speak with you alone."

I replied that it was also my desire; and, turning to my aunts who were beside us, I desired them to leave me alone with him for a quarter of an hour. They consented, and retired.

A few long moments elapsed in silence; our eyes shunned each other like our thoughts; suddenly he took my hand, I burst into tears, and said to him:—

"Charles, I am now alone in the world. Will you protect me?"

"Oh, I love you: I will always love you," he replied.

"Do you approve of my going to Paris?"

"How can I, when it will separate us? Why not remain at Villers-Hellon with M. Collard?"

"My aunt is a mother to me. I must follow and obey her, until I shall *have to obey*——"

I durst not conclude my sentence. He did not reply. Silence for several minutes again ensued. I exerted all my energy to break it.

"I believe you love me," I said precipitately. "I know that I love you! We are affianced by mutual affection; but tell me, Charles, in the name of our fathers who are in heaven, am I the wife whom you have chosen?

"Alas! I have chosen you from among all;—but my affairs, my fortune!——"

"Hear me! When you were rich and I was poor, I loved you enough to forget that distinc-

tion. I now claim my right. Would it make you unhappy, Charles, to be beloved ?"

" Can I drag you into utter ruin ? Alone, I can support it ; but I could not bear to see you sharing my privations. But I will rebuild my fortunes. Then——"

" Then, fortunate or not, will you choose me——?"

" How can I make you such a promise ? How can I bind your young life to my regrets and my deceptions ?"

" It is enough, Sir ; I understand you. May God pardon you ! you have most cruelly deceived me."

" Marie, for mercy's sake, believe me ! If I refuse my happiness——"

He threw himself on his knees, and covered with his kisses my hands, with which I would have hid my face ; I felt his lips touch my cheek as he kissed away a tear.

" What !" cried I ; " you would obtain from me now that which you should not obtain even were I about to become your wife. Your conduct is base indeed, Sir ; it is cowardly in the extreme."

I arose, and rang violently for a servant,

whom I ordered to light M. Ch——, as he wished to retire, to his chamber; then, when the door was closed, I could have wished to die. I passed the whole of the night on my knees, with my head resting on the hands of my poor Antonine, who, like myself, was overwhelmed with sorrow and despair.

Towards the morning I heard the sound of a horse's foot. It was his. In passing under my windows his eyes sought me, but they met not mine, which followed him notwithstanding. He turned his head thrice, and thrice I stood in need of all my courage to withstand the promptings of my heart. At last he urged his horse into a gallop, and I saw him no more—I have never seen him since!

CHAPTER XXX.

I REMAINED for a long time very unhappy, but without despair, without tears. I had been wrecked against friendship, love, against all that I had admired, dreamed of, desired in this life. The awakening was cruel. I entered into the world of reality discouraged, indifferent; resolved to do as others did; to suffer the common lot; to think with the rest of mankind; to comprehend in the happinesses of existence for the future nothing but that of doing good, and satisfying myself with the pleasures of others.

I knew that the avowed affection of M. Ch—— had drawn upon me the censure of those charitable persons who seem to create virtues in themselves by exposing faults in others. It neither astonished nor depressed me. In learning the fragility of all worldly things, I was

also made acquainted with the all-powerful and firm happiness of a good conscience.

My cousin Garat was married, in the month of October, to M. Sabatié, who was a suitable husband, and one very easy to love. I remained alone with my aunt, who treated me with the greatest affection, and I obtained from her permission to pay all my own expenses. Lalo, my faithful servant, was also with me—she who had for forty years loved, served, and nursed, with a devoted attachment, my poor grandfather, his children, and his grand-children. I was independent enough, and sufficiently miserable.

My aunt went much into society; I sought it rarely. My studies and private occupations were for the time forgotten, and I spent my hours in speaking of my grandfather to Lalo. We wept, I consoled her, and in turn she consoled me. To divert my thoughts, I went occasionally to my aunt De Martens, to Madame Montbreton, to Madame Léautaud. I took lessons in singing of Madame Lina Frappa, who sang deliciously, and whose heart and good disposition I preferred even to her sweet voice.

This winter I saw again M. Felix de Vio-

laine, who came sometimes to my aunt De Martens. He loved me for two days; took a somewhat serious fancy for my sister; was beloved and accepted by her, and became my brother-in-law in the month of December. M. de Violaine, without exaggeration, was a frank and upright man, with an excellent heart, an agreeable exterior, and a good place in the forests of the crown.

The happiness of Antonine was somewhat reflected on my life. I spent several days at her house at Dourdan; and the love that she bore for Felix, and the love that he returned to her, added to the warmth of affection with which they treated me, awakened youthful thoughts in my sad memory. Unfortunately I was driven from Dourdan by a severe inflammation in the stomach, which took me back to M. Marjolin and Paris, suffering very disagreeably. Incessantly retained in my arm-chair, my only mundane pleasures were the theatres. I went to the Theatre Français, and had the good fortune to see Mlle. Rachel in Iphigénie and Mithridate. I had often before applauded with enthusiasm the great *artistes* of the Opera and the Bouffes; but what I felt on

seeing this young girl was more than admiration, it was a deep sentiment of the most affectionate sympathy. Her voice caused my heart to vibrate; my thoughts were ennobled and elevated. Her chaste and penetrating looks smiled to my looks, and I could have wished that she could read in my eyes the enthusiasm and respect with which she inspired me.

My inflammation, my melancholy, and my majority having given me greater independence, and my singing lessons taking me twice a-week to the Rue d'Aguesseau, I often called on Madame Léautaud.

My misfortunes, in leaving a void in my heart, had created a desire in me to revive all my old friendships; and Marie, sad, and suffering like myself, resumed by degrees her place in my affections. She knew that I had loved, that I had been beloved, and that I was no longer so. I knew that she was not happy. We understood each other now; and we often sat for hours suffering together, exchanging looks of sorrow, but without exchanging a single word.

Madame Léautaud was especially subject to sad and long abstractions, of which our hero,

our poet, M. Clavé, was the cause; innocent in my opinion, very despicable in hers. According to her belief, M. Clavé was a *figurant;* he had only written to me as from Algiers to lay a snare for us, to collect again all the threads of our intrigue, to unfold it to the world, and thus to attach to his name a scandalous renown. In vain did I state that I had never seen M. Clavé on the boards, or on the list of the Opera. In vain did I endeavour to convince her that her suspicions were an insult to him, or a chimerical torture for herself.

She assured me that she had met him in the street, at the theatre; and that it was necessary for her honour and peace that he should be removed from her.

Not sharing in these opinions, I tried to combat them, or to prevent her thinking of them. Several times I wished to retract my promise given in the spring; to reply to M. Clavé's letter, and thus to know if he were really in the deserts of Africa or behind the scenes of the Opera; but she always conjured me not to commit a new imprudence, and I ceded to her wishes.

After having given birth to a child, Marie

became healthy and happy in appearance; but her sadness, her melancholy infatuation as to M. Clavé, acted so seriously upon her already enfeebled health, that she was at length obliged to quit Paris, to go in search of peace and quietness at Busagny.

Before her departure she made me promise that I would spend some days with her. One letter, two letters, three letters came successively, urging me to fulfil my promise. I spoke to my aunt Garat about the invitation which I had received from Mlle. Nicolaï, but she pursuaded me not to accept it. But Madame de Martens, to whom M. Marjolin had recommended the country for the benefit of my health, urged her sister to consent, and my journey to Busagny was fixed for the first days of June.

END OF VOLUME I.

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